

ROUNDabout

Spring 2009



The newsletter for Gather 'Round leaders

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The discouraged disciples walking to Emmaus after Jesus' death were entranced by the teachings of the stranger they encountered on the road. But in spite of the words—surely familiar—they did not recognize Jesus. Only in the breaking of the bread were their eyes opened. Then their conscious minds accepted the truth that their hearts had already grasped: here was Jesus, the Christ, with them again.

I'm cheating a little by using this story from Luke because Mark is the gospel we feature this quarter. But I can't resist because it makes my point so aptly.

In our study of the Bible we generally use plenty of words to unpack meaning. As we grow from childhood into adulthood we place more and more emphasis on forming and articulating our thoughts. But this is not the only way to "learn" the story and in fact it is not enough.

We need to engage the text with our hearts and our emotions, our eyes and our hands, as well as with our minds. So while the Gather 'Round reflecting and connecting times pose questions that stimulate thinking and discussion, we also offer some simple prompts, sometimes in the form of "I wonder" questions, to stir the senses and evoke empathy and imagination.

Like the disciples, let us acknowledge our burning hearts as well as our conscious minds.

—Anna Speicher,
Director and Senior Editor

See, hear, understand

The spring quarter begins with the first Sunday in Lent. Stories from Mark emphasize themes of seeing, hearing, and understanding. In Mark's account, we share in Jesus' suffering and feelings of abandonment. On Easter, we marvel with Mary Magdelene and other women as they encounter an angel and a miracle when they had expected grief and sorrow.

In the last 5 sessions we return to the book of Acts and the story of Paul and the early church. This is a thriller with arrests and intrigue, stirring words and heroic acts, shipwrecks and miracles.

Teaching Sunday school is a holy calling. Like Jesus, we reflect the love and character of God as we guide children and youth in experiences that bring them closer to God. Like Paul, our mission is to tell the good news to the whole world. We can begin by engaging our own children and youth in exploring what it means to live as members of God's new community.

Flexible, adaptable Multiage

Gather 'Round offers year-round Multiage materials, for grades K–6. This unit includes a range of activities for both older and younger children. Many congregations find that these broadly written materials are the perfect solution for situations where children of varying ages are grouped together.

Teachers are also discovering just how flexible and adaptable Multiage materials are. Since all Gather 'Round age groups focus on the same Bible story each week, some Middler and Primary teachers are using the Multiage books alongside their regular teacher's guides. They mix and match ideas to provide the best fit for their particular groups. Find sample sessions from the Multiage teacher's guide and student book at www.gatherround.org/freesamplesessions.html.

“I teach a small class of 3 regular students and a few others from time to time in the grade range from 6 to 10. The Gather 'Round Bible insights are outstanding and help me prepare theologically for each session. The wide range of activities allows me to adapt as needed.”

EDUCATOR'S TIP

—Larry Klinger,
Olivet Church of the Brethren,
Somerset, Ohio

**Copy and distribute to
all teachers and leaders.**

**PDF at:
www.gatherround.org**

Just in case!

Sometimes you need to tweak or adapt a session activity. Consider keeping these multi-purpose supplies on hand in your classroom, so you'll have creative options no matter what:

- **Recycled art:** Ask volunteers to find and cut pictures from magazines, calendars, and greeting cards from home to use in your classroom. Then you are ready to make collages, illustrate posters or reuse in other creative ways.
- **Surprise box:** Foster children's curiosity in a stimulating environment. Place small, interesting items from nature or your home in a box along with magnifying glasses for children to explore and examine as they arrive.
- **File folders:** Collect used file folders to use as heavy paper for projects such as bookmarks, nametags, and patterns.
- **Digital camera:** Think of ways your group might use a camera to enhance learning. Or, take photos of the children while they're involved in activities and post them on a wall or in a scrapbook from week to week.
- **Reference books and pictures:** Picture books, Bible dictionaries, or stories that go with the theme offer individual and group learning opportunities. Use the books or art as discussion starters, inspiration for art work, concrete examples, or a way to engage slower readers. If you have access to the Internet and a computer, you can find religious art to go with many of the Bible stories.

For more ideas on supplies in your classroom, check out chapter 9 in the Gather 'Round Handbook.

Spring 2009 Talkabout • Living the Good News Together

The Spring 2009 Talkabout is a paper bus and sticker sheet. Each "license plate" sticker gives families a way to journey with God all week long. After following the activity suggestions, use the stickers to decorate your bus.



www.gatherround.org



Free sample sessions,
Bible texts, and more at
www.gatherround.org

