

Salt Reef Sunday School Curriculum

My name is Jason Smith; I am the Administrative Assistant and Youth Coordinator with the Church of the Resurrection, Parish of the Nerepis and St John. Below is snapshot of what a typical Sunday School service is like and a little background of the new 3 year rotation curriculum I am currently developing. This curriculum is designed to establish a Christian foundation that allows for children to develop their spirituality and relationship with the Lord in a group setting and skills to help them develop at home.

My background includes a Bachelor of Education with over 10 years of experience with youth in church and non-church settings. I have been with the Parish of the Nerepis and St John for 10 years and have been employed for 4 years as the Administrative Assistant with the past two at full time with the Youth Coordinator role. My role as Youth Coordinator consists of leading and organizing the senior Youth Group, the junior youth group Kingdom Come, Salt Reef Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, St. Nicholas Eve and Family Camp.

Salt Reef Sunday School Format

For the most part the format is similar every week. Depending on the lesson it could vary. A typical month consists of 3 Sundays in Salt Reef and 1 Sunday join the congregation with our Family Service. During that service the children are involved in the readings, prayers and take parts in other ways.

Typical Format consists of:

Music worship – either live music with guitar or music on CD

Welcome and gather around the altar for the children

Either an object lesson or I Wonder questions to create discussion

Reading and lesson with explanation

Prayer either popcorn together or one of the children reads one (Creed, Lord's Prayer, Confession)

Depending on size of the group work together on a craft, game or split into groups with a leader and go into a more in depth question

Clean up and head out during the Offertory Hymn and Peace

We have a monthly rotation of teachers with usually 3-4 in the room with the children.

Curriculum

- Year 1 Old Testament lessons
- Year 2 New Testament lessons and the Seasons of the Church
- Year 3 Who is God/Who is Jesus/Who is the Holy Spirit/Prayer/Discipleship/The Bible

Background of Curriculum

My biggest challenge in 2013 of my Youth Coordinator role was taking over the responsibilities of Salt Reef Sunday School. I attended a conference in November 2012 on Children Spirituality. I learned from that conference is that traditional Sunday School format is killing children's spiritual growth. Sunday School is typically just 45 minutes of entertaining the children with biblical stories and crafts that are often meaningless to them. By the time they enter the church full time as teens or young adults, they often have very little knowledge of what is happening in the service, why we pray this particular prayer, read this lesson etc. They often get bored, uninterested and may leave the church altogether. Children are proven to be more spiritual than adults and it is our responsibility to help them grow their spirituality and not kill it. Now that being said, I am not saying that the Church of the Resurrection in particular is "killing" our children's spirituality. Based on what I learned in the conference we are doing very well. Our Family Services which we have at least once a month, allow the children the chance to take part of the service by reading, serving, greeting, helps children greatly in understanding the church services. Other churches do not do this and a children's church experience is only in the Sunday School room or they have a small children's focus before the service and are whisked away for the remaining.

I took on the challenge to change that. I asked myself, what can we do on Sunday mornings, that the kids will still have fun and learn what they need to know to become self-efficient growing Christians. By teaching them these skills they can be life-long Christians.

I created a vision for the Sunday School teachers and volunteers to promote and develop the spirituality of the children of Salt Reef. The regular church services' readings and lessons are based on a three year cycle, Years A, B and C. Within this cycle the Old Testament is read in it's entirety and the New Testament is read yearly. I decided that Salt Reef should have a recurring cycle of lessons. This will provide stability, be cost effective, and promote continuous learning. Children's learning development advances roughly every 3 years. That is why they are tested in grade 3, 6 and 9 in schools. By rotating a 3 year church curriculum, each child should get the rotation of lessons 2-3 times, with each time getting something more out of the lesson. For example, someone who is 4 years old will get the lessons at 4, 7, 10 and by the time it comes a fourth time they may be "too old" for Sunday School but at each level they will get a deeper understanding of the lesson.

Salt Reef begins the same time in the church service in the Red Sea Room. Exceptions would be Family Service (once a month, or special services like Palm Sunday)

A typical Salt Reef begins with worship of live music or music on CD. The children have their own altar set up and together will change the hangings depending on the season. No communion is performed but most of the same items match the altar in the sanctuary. After the worship we

welcome the children and ask them a series of wonder questions. These questions are made to make the children think and they are not a yes or no question. Together we will work on the answer of the question based on the children's responses with a bit of direction from the teacher. Next would be a reading that either the children or leader would read. An explanation would be done and then we would go into prayer.

After prayer or the reading depending on the lesson would go and do a craft or game that associates with the lesson, rotate between stations if the lesson requires multiple lesson points or work on a discussion question in a smaller group with a leader. They can express their answer in any form (writing, drawing, coloring, creating etc) that they see if. After this it would be about time for the children to return to the church.

I believe that with Salt Reef's new vision and goals to develop young Christians on their journey with the Lord will be successful. It will be interesting to see the benefits of the new curriculum and how that shapes our children. This is an important ministry and I would like to thank all my leaders and volunteers who helped shape Salt Reef this year and for the years to come.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate in contacting me as I would love to discuss your child's Christian Education plan with you. You can reach me via email therezadm@gmail.com or phone the Parish Office (506) 738-3474.

Thank you and God Bless

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