

A special event or holiday club for children

On your marks:

For most churches today the Sunday school or whatever you call your group is unlikely to be the place where you can share the Christian story with new children. To do that your church will need to create new opportunities to meet the majority of children who are out there in your community. Working with the local schools is one way forward and another is to run a special children's event or series of events spread out across the year. This latter idea is demanding but is more possible for smaller churches than the major one week focus in the summer such as the traditional five day Holiday Club. So where do you start? What is involved? Who do you need to help you?

Get set:

Share your idea for a 'children's special' with your minister at church and a few other people who work with the children. Test the water and see what their reaction is. If at least some people feel it is a possibility, then organise a planning meeting and use the following pointers as a framework for your discussions and prayers.

Go!

1. First decide on the date and theme for your event. Take into account school holidays and other local events that are happening at that time of year. There are a range of Christian festivals and special times in the church's year, which lend themselves to a one-day special.
2. Decide on the timings for your event. Will it be in a morning or an afternoon on a Saturday or school holiday day? Will it be over lunchtime including a packed lunch or will it be an after-school event during term time? In order to comply with the Children's Act such events should not exceed two hours if you are running a series of up to 6 events throughout the year. Decide what age-range will be invited and what your maximum number can be, given a ratio of at least one adult to every eight children for those over eight and a higher ratio for those who are younger.
3. Specials such as these need a named team leader and a number of other key people to do a variety of important jobs that will hold the event together. These include people to be responsible for: publicity, first aid, registration, leading the key activity groups, refreshments, music, and stewarding the premises. It also a good idea to appoint

someone to be a prayer coordinator so that the church can be kept informed and praying for the event.

4. A catchy title for your event is always helpful, particularly for the publicity. Think through what will be your key Bible story or stories that you will be exploring. This will also give you some ideas for the graphics for any fliers and posters. For most children this may be the only opportunity they have to hear some Christian teaching and to come close to the story of Jesus and key Bible stories. If these events become a regular feature within the life of the Church, they are in effect becoming the main way in which we are passing on the good news to the generation of children who are entrusted to our care within our own particular communities.

5. It is important to think carefully about the choice of venue for your event. It may be that your church has good facilities where such an event for say up to 50 children is possible. Some churches themselves lend themselves to these events, with all sorts of side chapels and areas where activities can be safely organised. Do however bear in mind the accessibility of toilets. However, you may like to consider a nearby school or hall as an alternative venue, which for many might be a more approachable and neutral place, if you are trying to reach out to new children who do not normally come into church. Using other premises may well mean there is a cost involved. In general you will need to consider whether you put a price on the day to cover the expense of craft materials for example as well as any hiring of a hall. Parents are not unused to paying money for special events for their children and so do not be shy about making a modest charge. It often means that in the parents' eyes the day is more valued.

6. Check carefully through the regulations concerning running children's events that are contained within documents such as 'Safe from harm' published by the government. There is a useful summary of these in «page: Getting Going with Organising a Children's Event=811» in the ideas section of the Barnabas website. All those working with children need to be registered and your church should have in place a policy concerning this. It is also advisable to inform the local authority (OFSTED) especially if your event includes a number of younger children.

7. Your special event needs to be shaped carefully to include a variety of activities, which sometimes are all together and at times in groups. When children arrive they will need to be registered. You will need to know a contact number for each child and any information concerning their health and medication. It is a good idea to have some 'joining activity' to be going on with during registration.

The upfront leader should welcome the children and introduce the theme with games, an icebreaker and music. During the event there should be opportunities for group activities, which could be craft, drama, music, storytelling or even perhaps cooking, depending on the skills of the leaders. Children could stay in groups with just the one activity or it may be possible for them to rotate around the different types of activities during the event so they have a taste of a number of creative responses to the theme. At some point gather them altogether for the main story, which should expand and grow the theme of the day, including more songs. Quizzes and challenges are a good way in which to reinforce what is being shared with a lot of laughter! Build in a refreshment slot at some point about halfway through the event.

Draw the whole event to a conclusion, involving some closing prayers, time for some

quiet reflection as well as a final song. Allow enough time for the collecting of any items that have been made. This final section is an opportunity for the children to show and share what has been done and it is a good idea to invite parents to arrive to collect their children a little earlier than the advertised finishing time so that they can be part of this.

8. Although attention to all this organisational detail and the running order of the event are both very important, it is vital not to lose sight of the fact that what really matters is time for relationships to be built up with the children. It is important for group leaders to learn names, talk with the children and to listen to what they are saying as they experience the event. Such opportunities often arise during craft sessions and the other group activities. It is worth reminding ourselves that if we are to share the good news of Jesus with children then we ourselves must be the good news of Jesus.

9 Depending on the time of year, these events could well spill on into become an outing together with families, a BBQ, a picnic or a crazy sports day! Some events might take a particular theme that needs the expertise of an outsider such as drama or circus skills or puppets. The Barnabas Children's Ministry Team is available to come and help with such days, to take a lead and provide a particular input. [Contact us](#) for more details.

10. Finally in your discussions it is also useful to think through what the follow-up from this event will be. Is there a big church festival coming soon to which children and families can be invited? When will the next event be? Is there a Church social or outing planned which can welcome those with whom you have made contact through this event? Some churches make a point of following up their special children's events by visiting all the families of those who came. Certainly it will be important to find ways to strengthen contacts with any new people who have come close to the story of Jesus because of these days. The work of the prayer coordinator needs to continue and these special events need to become a regular and attractive feature of your church's witness to Jesus.

Downloaded from Barnabas in Churches - resourcing work among children and families - www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk

Visit our website for ideas, books and resources, news and information about our work and ministry. All that we do is only made possible through generosity of those who support us. Find out more about supporting us - www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/support-and-donate/

© BRF 2012 | Visit www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/terms/ for copyright.