



Happy New Year!

A new year rolls in and invites us to start afresh. Even those of us who have seen a few new years and new decades and know that old habits are hard to break, and that we are often afflicted by the same old same olds of humanity, can be enticed to take a few deep breaths and think of the mercies of God which are new every morning, and to try a few new rhythms in 2010. If we are not sure how to do this, hopefully we have some very young friends close by in our community, for whom almost everything is new – and so can lead us in this adventure.

If you are trying something new this year in your community, why not write and tell us about it – even if it doesn't go especially well – in fact especially if it doesn't go well, there will be much we can learn...

Learning....

One of the things that is most inspiring about being around children is how much they love real live learning. And I'm amazed at how much I continue to learn whenever I am with children. And what doubly amazes me is that many times when I have been with a bunch of kids and been blown away by new ideas and insights – I've been the one with the 'teacher' label on. Thing is, I remember this from when I was a kid, how much I loved being around grown ups who were still up for learning something new. I loved seeing the lights go on for them – I guess that's why they were always the ones with the twinkle in their eyes.

As a teacher I have found that the strongest chance I have of teaching anyone anything, is to remain a learner.

Let me encourage you to keep those L plates firmly in place...There are lots of ways to learn, but the best way is to do it in community. You no doubt have your favourite websites, journals, books and mentors...but let me also recommend taking a leap into some fair-dinkum, no beg-your-pardons theological study. (Or if you've done that, encourage someone else into it). There are a number of great courses exploring the theology and practice of children and Families ministry. Below is a quick chart of some options.

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Prayer COMMISSIONING

Lots of churches like to launch the new year with a 'commissioning' for their leaders. This is a great idea – more praying for one another in the body of Christ is always going to lead us in good paths.

In some churches leaders of various programs are asked to stand in the service as they are prayed for...and then the whole congregation stand and are 'commissioned' as we recognise that

God's power at work within us is not confined

to the formal programs of the church and ministry isn't done just by designated leaders.

Perhaps your children could be especially 'commissioned' too, as part of this process.

Ask the children to stand and for the grown ups to pray for them, perhaps laying their hands on a shoulder or head of a child close to them as they pray.

Then reverse the process and ask the children to pray for the grown ups.

**"We are the Body
of Christ...
His Spirit is with
us"**



Dates	Feb 8-12 9am- 5pm	Feb 15-19 9:30-4:30	Thursdays in Semester 1 beginning Feb 25 6pm-9pm	Online Beginning May 17
College	Tabor College (North Ringwood)	CCTC (Mulgrave)	Whitley College (Parkville)	Australian College of Ministries
Contact:	9844 8800 tabor.vic.edu.au	9790 1000 cctc.edu.au	9340 8100 whitley.unimelb.edu.au	1800 672 692 info@acom.edu.au
Course	Children's ministry Intensive	Children's ministry intensive	The World of the Child (Sociological and Theological perspectives)	Children's Ministry
Key Presenter	Tammy Tolman	Brent Alred + guests	Rev. Jude Waldron	On line (Beth Barnett)
Why you might choose this course	Tammy is one of the long term stayers in children and fam's ministry. She's practical but gives well throughout strategies. Her recent book 'Piece by Piece' is set to become a classic. This course will have some follow up presentations so will facilitate community learning and networking	CCTC was a pioneer in establishing a theology subject in Children's ministry under Ron Buckland. This course includes attending 'Ministry to Children' seminar (Careforce Feb 26/27) – which everyone who is going to be within 20 metres of a child in 2010 should go to-so do the intensive as well and get credit!	The creativity of presentation, learning styles and assessments in this course will stretch you but you'll be having so much fun you won't notice your brain hurting because you'll be on the floor laughing. Jude really understands that 'play' is the child's 'work', and she models the methodologies. A smorgasbord of everything from psycho-social development to duty of care to theology of worship.	This is course is just becoming available, but hits the spot for those of us who can't get to a once a week class or carve out a whole week of life for an intensive. Many of us also work well on line, where we can freely voice our questions without having to become classroom extroverts!

PRAYER

A child asks: What have you seen?

Congregation: We are witnesses to the greatness of God

Reader 1: The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands

Reader 2: No one has ever seen God: It is God the only Son who is close to the father's heart who has made him known

Prayer 1: Great God, We have seen your wonder in the grandeur and intricacy of creation, and we know you through Jesus life on our planet, in our kind of skin. Help us each day to be watching out for more of you and to point you out to one another

A child asks: What have you heard?

All: We are witnesses to the Goodnews of God

Reader 3: Jesus came proclaiming the GoodNews, and saying "The Time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is near!"

Reader 4: Lord to whom else can we go? You have words of eternal life.

Prayer 2: Lord Jesus, You brought good news. And you have called us to follow you. Enable us to be good news spreaders in our families and homes, our schools, our work, To speak out that your kingdom is near our friends, our neighbourhoods, our gardens, our teams, to speak words of eternal life across fences and down streets, over coffee and around

A child asks: What have you received?

All: We are witnesses to the grace of God

Reader 5: From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace

Reader 6: We have different gifts, according to the grace given us

Prayer 3: Holy Spirit, thankyou for your gifts among us, displaying your creative power, forming us as the body of Christ and fuelling us to serve. Give us love and joy and peace in one another's beautiful differences, and may all the world be blessed by the overflow of your fullness.

A Child: We are the body of Christ.

All: His Spirit is with us. Amen.

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Overcoming the Barriers to Study....

Time

In 2003 my senior pastor suggested that along with my role on Staff, and being a mom with two children (one at kinder and one at school), I should think about doing some theological study. I thought he was unreasonable and had no understanding of the time pressure I was already under. But my sister helped me see it in another way. 'You're going to read some books anyway, so let someone choose them for you, help you understand them and give you some friends to talk about it with. You'll love it.' And she was right. My time in class each week became an oasis in my life. Rather than being demanding, it was refreshing, energising and nourishing. It was 'me' time.



Money

No bones about it, this kind of learning is expensive. It's good quality stuff, giving you resources for how to think and work through tricky issues, not just clicking on Wikipedia for a quick one size fits all answer. If money is the only barrier to study for you, let me encourage you to speak to your church community about how you can be supported or sponsored. There may be funds in the budget for training or professional development. Sometimes these funds are nominally tagged for youth, but may not be being used because there are no takers. Whatever age you are, you will be a valuable resource for your community, and well worth their investment.



Confidence

So many of us have educational 'demons' that stir up trouble for us. The ideas of failure, performance and achievement mess with our brains even when we are pursuing a life of grace and freedom. The important thing in any learning is the process and the struggle. We don't learn unless we are trying and making some mistakes. I can personally vouch for all of these courses as safe places to be yourself and learn in your own way.



Relevance

Fruitfulness is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. If you are going to invest time money and risk your self esteem in study, you want to know that will reap a good harvest in your ministry.

Enhance is a program designed to help people serving in local churches and doing some theological study to join the dots between their learning experience and their ministry experience. The program offers peer support, interactive input from ministry specialists and mentoring in fortnightly Friday mornings. This is a great way to tie the threads of life together. See attached brochure.



In 2010 the KidsKorner space on the back page of the Witness! will be renamed 'The Wide eyed Witness' and have a bit of a graphic design makeover.

wide-eyed witness

The Wide eyed witness is giving space to what children see and hear and witness - they are witnesses of God's actions, to the breaking in of the kingdom, and they are witnesses of faith - our faith and their own. And they see from a little bit below our usual eyeline ...

Submissions for this space from the children in your community are most welcome! Suitable contributions may include

- Pictures, Poems or Stories written by children (perhaps a rewrite of a bible story in their own style),
- Interviews with children,
- Photos of artwork they have done,
- Prayers children have written,
- Stories of what children have done in your community, (preferably in their own words, but feel free to scribe for them.)

We will always endeavour to include a photograph of the child/children along with their contribution. This can happen in two ways, we can send our BUJ photographer out to you or you can send in a high res digital photo.

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