

Church in Anaheim—Children’s Work during the Pandemic

UNPRECEDENTED TIMES:

We are living in an unprecedented time with unprecedented daily pressures. Our lives have completely changed.

- **In-person meetings cancelled**
- **In person children’s meetings cancelled**
- **Schools closed**
- **Jobs stopped, paused or working from home**
- **Children at home 24/7**
 1. Many of you have pressures and added responsibilities that are more demanding now than before. In addition to these added pressures from the outside, you are tasked with being a dad, mom, teacher, barber, grocery buyer, music and art teacher, exercise leader, internet and TV guardian, cook, house cleaner, etc. Many of you need to continue daily work from home or essential work in the office while managing all of this and more. Some have lost jobs and don’t know what will happen next month or next week. We would like to offer you some small ways to encourage your children and instill in them the confidence that the Lord will prevail in each of our circumstances and in all of our lives. We hope these materials would remind and ensure the children that the hearts and minds of their parents and serving ones remain in Christ.
 2. As serving ones with the children, and as parents ourselves, we want you to know that we understand the limitations, difficulties, and sometimes intimidating or seemingly impossible burden of encouraging our children in the midst of suffering. Be encouraged! We love you and your children and are praying for all of you. We are also suffering with you and are going through similar experiences. Through our prayers for you all, we trust the Lord will gain what He is after in each of our families.

OUR RESPONSE:

- **To continue praying and seeking the Lord on behalf of all the children and all of our families each Thursday night.**

We have NOT neglected the children’s service and are continuing to meet at least every Thursday night for prayer and fellowship for the children and their families. In our fellowship, the Lord has led us to do what we have been doing.
- **We have continued having fellowship with the elders of the church on how to properly care for the children and the families.**
- **To continue writing and distributing the stories for weekly children’s meetings with families and/or small groups.**

In our fellowship we were clear not to pause or stop writing the sets of stories used with the children, but to continue so that the families can present them at home or join themselves in groups.
- **To send weekly emails with the songs and verses related to the story for weekly children’s meetings with families and/or small groups.**
- **To send daily emails with verses and songs to strengthen family times in the Word of God.**
- **To hold a virtual Church in Anaheim 6th grade conference.**

THE PARENTS' RESPONSE:

- “What should I do with the emails I have been receiving?”
- “These emails gave me the “push” that I needed and we have finally started to have family times memorizing a verse and singing a song together. It has been marvelous! I never thought I could do this!”
- “I don’t serve with the children. Who is going to tell the story to my child? I do not know the children songs.”
- “I’ve been telling the story to my child. I’ve been calling another mom and we get together with our children and we tell the story to them. I’ve been video calling other families to have corporate times!”
- “Who is going to do children’s meeting for my son?”

These are just a few responses we have heard. On the one hand, we know some of you are struggling with how to carry times with your children. On the other hand, we have heard many encouraging responses. We hope we all can be open to another and be mutually help to strengthen our personal and corporate times with our children during these times.

OUR BURDEN:

- **That we all learn how to present the Bible as the Word of God with all the inheritance we have received in the Lord’s Recovery to our children at their level.**
 1. In the past, we have had fellowship with many parents and the burden for all levels has been presented. We hope the parents are aware of their children’s particular level and the corresponding burden and material offered for each level. It would benefit all to go to www.churchinanaheim.com/children to view the document entitled “A Panoramic View of the Levels We Use for the Children’s Meetings” and hear the recorded fellowship entitled “Fellowship given to Parents and Children Serving Ones on August 17, 2019.” If you have any questions, please reach out to any of the children’s serving ones in your District. (E.g. what is your focus with your 3 or 4 years old son or daughter? The preciousness of humanity...)
 2. We have not yet developed specific materials for the 3 and 4 year old children and are looking to the Lord for His timing and provision to do this. The vision and the content for each level are there in the ministry. There are only a few who are laboring much and continually relying on the grace of Christ to put these materials together with love and a burden for your children. If you are burdened to help develop and implement these materials, please let us know.
- **That we all live a normal Christian church life of coming together with our families to enjoy the Lord by reading and singing together, and also have corporate times with other families in God’s Word.**
 1. For this, we have been sending daily and weekly emails to encourage the parents with materials they can use. Our hope and prayer is that this would foster valuable time with the children in the Word of God at their level. Jumping up and down or sitting with them and talking with them about a verse or a song would go so far in their daily encouragement.

From the ministry (300 Golden Bible Verses Preface)

 - **“By choosing the best verses concerning God... we can impress them (the children) in a brief and simple way that there is an almighty One in the universe, who is our God.”**
(The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1967, vol. 1, pp. 504-505)

- “...Parents should teach their children when they are young so that what has been taught can be wrought into their ‘blood.’ Then it will be impressed deeply within them and will be difficult to forget.” (*Bearing Remaining Fruit*, vol. 1, ch. 16, p. 196)
 - “We suggest having two home meetings a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. The father should lead the morning time and the mother should lead the evening time...” (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, pp. 542-543).
2. If you have a 4-year-old, maybe you only have about 5 minutes with them. Your time may consist singing or playing the song while he or she is bouncing on the couch and doing jumping jacks. You can then read the verse aloud and have them attempt to repeat it. Even small moments like this can develop a sweet taste of coming together to sing to the Lord and to learn a verse. If they touch life, peace, and joy in the Word of God and with songs to the Lord, this will mark them and give them a taste for eating and drinking of the Lord. Many of you may think you don’t know how to conduct these times. Some of us were encouraged to practice this with our own children who are now young people in the Lord’s recovery. We had no skills as a teacher, group leader, or even a good singer, but as parents, we felt and still feel a responsibility not only with our own children but with all the dear children in the church in Anaheim. They are in our hearts; we love them and we want to spend time with them.
 3. This time with our children can become the beginning of something bigger that the Lord can use. Such as more mutuality among our families and neighborhood children’s meeting (NCM). As you practice this at home, your child may want to invite a friend and their family. Why do we not have many NCMs? Maybe this is not our practice yet.
 4. **Please consider the next ten years:** If your child is 4-years old now and you practice these things, you will have a 14-year old brother or sister who knows how to read verses, pray-read, read the ministry, and enjoy singing to the Lord with their family and with other families! Our children will not only have the family they were placed by birth but will have a second and a third family they are connected to. This is even what the young people’s serving ones are encouraging us to do right now with our young people! But saints, when they have reached the age of a young person, it may be too late. These things should be normal to them by this time in their lives. Thank the Lord that we can testify of weeks of sweet and solid times with many of the young people who have had this kind of practice in their family lives. Recently in the YP work, we have been joined to other families and other YP to have corporate times. What happens with the parents that have a hard time “serving” with the young people? Well, maybe this was not their practice with their children. It is not normal for the parents; it is not normal for their children. To sit with a difficult middle schooler is more difficult than to sing with a child. If you start with them when they are children you will learn to know them and know how to “feed them” spiritually. This includes not only your child, but also the children that are growing up with your children. Ten years from now you may go to the YP Conference with them and will have weekly home meetings with them, however, if we don’t deliberately take the opportunity now when they are children, it may be more difficult to start a relationship later. We need to practice and practice how to feed a 4-year-old and a 14-year-old! Even how to minister to an infant! Again, this is not only for the sake of our own children. The Lord wants to reach other families so we can know them and cherish and nourish them for His increase and expression.
 5. Children’s service is not a skilled story, perfect singer, creative craft.... Our goal as parents is to help our children develop a taste for God’s Word (at their level), creating habits of coming together in a normal way. Maybe when the quarantine ends, we will have so many parents who were not serving with the children, wanting to join this service. Maybe we will have a

surplus of serving ones who want to come and tell the stories and we can do an 8-week rotation instead of a 4-week rotation!

6. We hope we can all have a normal church life of laboring on Christ in a secret way and having fellowship with the dear saints the Lord has placed next to us. We are dwelling in the house of the Lord, loving one another, knowing and caring for our families and enjoying Christ together as we receive new ones that are added to the church. This is the glorious church life!

OUR DIRECTION:

How will the Lord Advance?

- **We DO want the Lord to advance in the family church life using the riches of the ministry that have been developed in materials for the children.**

The habits we are developing (with our family times and meeting with other families) shouldn't stop after the pandemic is over. We hope this can be a new beginning and habit among our families.

- **We DO want to have corporate times with the children but as a supplement to family/groups times.**

We are planning to have our Family Summer Camp in July 23-25. We are also considering having online corporate times, maybe once a month. We are still fellowshiping about these corporate times.

- **We DO NOT want to produce a pre-recorded "program" for children allowing parents to go about their business.**
- **We DO NOT want parents or small groups to miss the opportunity for God to do His building work in our homes with our families and from house to house.**
- **Practical Questions:**

1. **How can we conduct corporate singing/story times? By levels? I.e. Pre-Kinder? K-1? 2-3? 4-5? By districts?**

In the church in Anaheim, we don't have full-timers for the children's work who can carry these times. Therefore, we need the commitment of the parents to conduct these **corporate singing/story times**.

2. **Should we establish new service groups by levels for the entire church in Anaheim?**

3. **How can we carry it out practically?**

When considering all the logistics to carry out all these things practically, it is not easy to do. However, if this is how the Lord is leading us, we want to follow Him. Today we don't have the time to hear all of your questions, requests, and concerns, but we need to hear from you. We would like you to email us what your individual/family needs are so we can best help you. We love you and are here to help you. Please reach out to us at church-in-anaheim-children@googlegroups.com.

We will also be sending you an email with a link to a Google Form, where we need you all to go and fill out the following information:

Is your family open to:

- Lead songs?
- Tell stories?
- Share a craft idea with the group?
- Which level are you open to serve with? Pre-Kinder? K-1? 2-3? 4-5?
- Help with the Family Summer Camp?