



Kids' Mission Involvement Interview

By Karin L. Semler

Heidi Handrick actively works to teach and involve children in God's mission. She currently serves as missions and ministry coordinator at Family of Christ Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, Co. She also served as a volunteer missionary in Togo from August 1999-June 2000, and as a third-grade teacher at St. Mark Lutheran School in Houston, Texas from 2000-2002.

When/How did God first plant the seed of mission service in your heart? "It's hard to say when God first planted seeds, but in retrospect, I can recognize that some of those initial seeds may have been back when a missionary from Africa came to talk at our church when I was 7 or 8 years old. Although I don't remember his presentation, years later, when I ended up on the mission field, I ran into this same missionary at a retreat and discovered that he was the one who had come to our church!"

How did North American kids support you during your mission service in Togo? "Kids from the school where some friends taught [in Houston] were praying for me every day. I even had a couple kids interview me for papers they were writing in school. Kids tend to be more open to how God could use them in similar ways [to what I was doing] that might be very new to them. Often, I have noticed that their faith is less limited by obstacles that the world often presents."

What specific ways did you incorporate mission education and involvement when you taught in a Lutheran school?

- "We prayed for missionaries using the LCMS World Mission "Pray for Us" monthly calendars and then tracked the areas with pins on a map.
- "The children individually prayed for missionaries during the morning chapel time.



- “We made a colorful, construction paper prayer chain on which we wrote our specific petitions for missionaries or world/local needs on the paper strips, then attached the growing chain to the ceiling perimeter of the room.
- “We devoted the last week of school (inviting up the younger second-grade class) to studying the *THUMB model, the 10/40 Window, and how we (the kids) could be involved right now in the worldwide mission effort.
- “I had my African artifacts on display and available for kids to interact with (which often attracted older kids from the school as well).
- “We devoted meaningful thought to how God could use each of us in some aspect of mission work, using real stories and songs.
- “We read missionary newsletters written by kids.
- “I gave many mission presentations to other classes (Kindergarten—eighth grade), decked out in full foreign garb, and always involving the kids’ ‘up front’ participation and involvement (never a one-sided presentation).
- “We collected ‘mites’ (each child receiving their own special children’s mite box) for LWML over a set period of time and discussed the projects our money would be supporting.”

Based on your experience, why is it important to involve children in Gods mission?

“Children more readily accept the impossible as possible, through faith, and enthusiastically support what God wants us all to do! Children also often serve as inspiration to the adults in their lives when they ask questions (raise interest) or proactively take a stand with missions-minded prayer or outreach.”

What are some ways in which adults can intentionally include children and youth in congregational mission support and involvement?

- “Use the mite boxes for kids from LCMS World Mission. Give one to children and invite them to participate in an opportunity where they are able to donate their monies.
- “Have the children in your congregation’s Sunday school and/or midweek program devote a period of time to praying for and supporting (financially or with encouraging cards) missionaries in another part of the world.
- “Get postcards for new missionaries from LCMS World Mission. Get students and their families to ‘adopt a missionary’ by writing an encouraging postcard and then including them in regular prayer.
- “Have a mission speaker give a uniquely directed presentation for the kids. (I recommend screening the presentation first.)
- “Involve high-school-aged kids who have taken a youth mission trip to intentionally pray for adults [or others] preparing for a mission trip.”



Concluding thoughts?

“Each of us is blessed to have the Holy Spirit *living* within, and the benefits that God has worked through our Baptism transcend age or understandable human ability. I like to look to other Christians who in Christ have done unimaginably great things for the kingdom and challenge myself to do the same, realizing that we are equipped with the same power from God. After all, we are brothers and sisters in Christ's mission.”

For additional information or ideas, Heidi can be contacted at heidihandrick@yahoo.com.

***THUMB** is an acronym that helps people remember the five largest religious groups with non-Christian beliefs. **T**ribal-**H**indu-**U**nreligious-**M**uslim-**B**uddhist. Each of these beliefs have major centers located in the 10/40 Window, an area between the 10th and 40th latitudes north of the equator, stretching from North Africa to East Asia in which live the vast majority of the world's approximately 10,000 unreached people groups and more than 80 percent of the world's poorest people. Teaching kids (and adults!) the THUMB model is an easy way to help us remember these people in our prayers and create more awareness of their presence in the world.

Karin L. Semler was director of mission information and education for LCMS World Mission from 2000-2003. She is a certified director of Christian education and served as a volunteer missionary in Japan for three and a half years.

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