

Planning for the new year using Workshop Rotation Model and Cornerstones Curriculum

Four steps to Rally Day:

1. Decide on the Scope and Sequence

- ✓ This is foundational to faith formation. There needs to be a logical sequence of Old Testament, New Testament and New Church stories that builds the understanding of the Bible and a faith to match. For instance, the *Witness to God's Presence* year studies the *Plagues and Passover* in the fall and then the *Last Supper* in the winter. When we taught this at our local church, we heard a 3rd grader say in March to the boy next to him, "Hey, this is the same meal that Moses ate." He was putting together the experiences from six months earlier. And by the end of the year, those children really understood how the Bible is a witness to God's Presence.
- ✓ Cornerstones has six themes, all of which have proven to develop strong connections between the faith in which Jesus was raised and how He was the Messiah. (<http://www.cstones.com/scope.htm>) Of course, you can create your own scope and sequence because Cornerstones doesn't confine you to buying a whole package; you can even order individual lessons from individual units.
- ✓ With the strength of a good scope and sequence in place, you will be able to invite people to teach in workshops that fit their skills. For instance, when leading the program for the *Messiah* year, I met a man who did tai chi every morning. Thinking on my feet, I was able to ask him to teach in February when we were doing the *Jesus' Baptism* unit. He said yes, followed the written lesson and then went on to demonstrate this discipline that is both physical and spiritual. Just as Jesus went to the desert to center himself in God, so this man used tai chi to invite God's presence into his daily life. It was extraordinary. I wasn't looking for a particular skill that day I talked with him. I was looking to match a talent with a particular Bible story that I knew we were covering that year. Let the scope and sequence be the foundation of your WRM program.
- ✓ Create your master plan
 - ✓ Create the calendar for the year:
 - Fill in holidays and special events (Bible presentation, a children's musical, school holidays.)
 - Are there missions outreach programs that should be integrated into the planning?
 - Fill in the units you want to teach so they naturally fit with the calendar.

- ✓ Create a sign-up sheet for the teachers that includes name, phone number and email address.
- ✓ Print out the overviews for the workshops of each unit (<http://www.cstones.com/scope.htm>).
- ✓ Print out the order form at http://www.cstones.com/curriculum_planning_guide.pdf to use as a way of keeping track of what lessons you will order by mid-July.
- ✓ Carry these four items with you on a clipboard or in a folder – by mid-July, aim to have workshops filled at least through Christmas.

Step 2: The Talent Search: Filling the calendar with teachers

Cornerstones is a talent-based curriculum. What does that mean? It means that when inviting people to teach Sunday School, you can look beyond the pool of the traditional folks who are always willing to teach. For example, in our *Noah's Ark: Where in the World* workshop, the class creates a flood. One traditional teacher told me, "Forget that! I don't know anything about creating floods." She wasn't the right person for that workshop. And yet, when leading a teacher training in Portsmouth, VA, I got three volunteers when I suggested that a civil engineer might enjoy teaching that workshop. And the model railroader wanted to help.

Another example is in the *Wandering in the Wilderness: Bible Improv* lesson. When I was at Glenview United Methodist Church, I invited a carpenter to lead the class in making a biblically proportioned Ark of the Covenant. He wasn't comfortable with the teaching aspect, so I invited a veteran Sunday School teacher to lead the Bible study. They made quite a team.

In the Workshop Rotation Model, you are already asking yourself, "Who would be a good fit for this particular workshop?" To assist you in your search for teachers, we are re-writing the overviews to not only give you an idea of the essence of each workshop but to also suggest what talents might enhance the lesson. Our hope is that you won't be intimidated by thinking that you must find those talents to have a successful program. We are simply trying to give you the tools to expand the pool of people you can invite to pass on the faith to the next generation. With the choice of eleven workshops for each unit, you won't be stuck with a workshop where you can't find the right teacher. Indeed, Cornerstones is the only curriculum that offers the flexibility to select exactly which workshops you want to run.

This talent-based approach is facilitated by the way that Cornerstones delivers curriculum. Once a lesson is downloaded from the disk onto your computer, you'll notice that it is a Word document that can be edited. You can customize the lesson to reinforce the theology of your own congregation/denomination and to highlight upcoming events. Email the lesson to the teachers,

encouraging them to add their own talents and creative ideas. They print out the lesson the way they want to teach it. It's a custom fit.

Every conversation becomes an invitation. Put together a small team of people who will start to talk to people about their talents, hobbies and careers. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to invite people to teach in a workshop and how often they say yes to passing the faith onto the next generation.

Step 3: Mechanics of Administration of Your Program

Here is a brief checklist of the other things that need to get done before Rally Day. This is not exhaustive – each church has its own way of managing its program.

- Order your curriculum.
Do yourself a favor and get organized with the codes of all lessons you will ever purchase from Cornerstones. Keep them in a binder as well as a folder on your computer.
- Email the workshop lessons and biblical backgrounds to the teachers, giving them permission to invest their talent into the lesson and then printing it out the way they want to teach it.
- Do room design and maintenance
Are you transforming any rooms ever the summer?
Do you want to make signs?
Even if there is shared space, are there ways that those rooms can be **easily** transformed on a Sunday morning?
- Gather room supplies
What are the Bible aids that each room needs? Class set of Bibles, maps/Bible atlas, concordance, Bible dictionary, illustrated children's Bibles.
Are there special supplies that you want to acquire for the year, like Body Sox® for the *Moved by the Spirit* workshops?
- Contact Shepherds
This newsletter will not address all of the varieties of inviting shepherds to be with one class for the whole year. If you use shepherds, start to communicate with them.
- Create attendance lists
Do you want to make name tags?

- Send out parent communications

Each Cornerstones unit has a biblical background, a one page overview of the Bible story. As well, there is a parent letter with simple ideas for faith formation in the home. Send these out as email attachments to current and potential families along with an invitation to Rally Day. Include where to drop off the children and where to meet at the end of the hour. This email communication can be done monthly about two weeks before the beginning of the next unit. This could be the vehicle that gets a child with irregular attendance to be at church more often. It can also be an open door for parents to ponder teaching.

Step 4: Teacher Training

This alone offers teachers and parents the opportunity to learn what the year is all about and generate excitement. It should include

- ✓ A strong affirmation of the scope and sequence for the year.
- ✓ Highlights of a handful of the workshops that are going to be taught.
- ✓ An experience with a part of a lesson.
- ✓ Resources and supplies.
- ✓ Food – it encourages attendance.

Pam Riedy of Cornerstones is available to lead teacher training for you. On a Saturday morning in Portsmouth VA with a group of about 50, she was able to fill the teaching chart for the whole year. It happened again in Brookfield CT. You can find out more that experience, go to <http://www.cstones.com/newsletters.htm#jul10>.

For details about a consultation, go to <http://www.cstones.com/consultations.htm>.

So, there are your four steps to being ready for Rally Day. I hope that as your summer progresses, you find wonderful people who have just the right talent to make a Bible story enter the hearts of your children.