

Reaching Your Community Through Children's Ministry

HOW CHANGING YOUR PRIORITIES
CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



Brian Ondracek

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www.pioneerclubs.org

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So You Want to Reach Your Community?

Imagine for a minute, you come up with a great idea for a new product. You spend hours designing it just right and have done some simple market research that indicates it will be a hit with everyone. You put in long hours to find a supplier who can produce your product to the highest standards. And you invest a good portion of your savings to have your creation manufactured.

Finally, the shipment of the first batch arrives. You are thrilled at the quality of the product and are convinced that every one of these treasures will be snatched up the minute they are seen. So you rent a booth at the most popular outdoor market around and proudly display your creation. Glancing around you are convinced that no one has a better display than yours. As the gates open, you're prepared to sell out and take orders for more.

But things don't go quite as you have planned. What you discover is that young children are the ones attracted to your table. Not just one or two—but dozens. The problem is children don't have the money to buy your product and they seem to be keeping potential buyers away. So you do what anyone would do—you spend all day shooing them away.

As the day draws to a close, disappointment sets in. It has been totally unsuccessful—unless you count the scores of children

who kept bothering you all day. Not a single adult with cash-in-hand did more than glance at your table.

At that moment you see another child headed your way. But this little boy is pulling his mother toward your table.

“See,” he says. “Look at these. Aren’t they cool?”

The mother comes closer and soon, to your surprise, she’s deep conversation with you about your product. After just a few minutes she pulls out her checkbook to purchase half a dozen items. What’s more, she wants to know if you’ll be at the market the next week. She is planning to return to your booth—and intends to bring some of her friends with her.

What happened you wonder? How were you able to make a sale so easily? And where were the adults earlier in the day?

ARE YOU FOCUSED ON THE RIGHT THING?

Of course, churches aren’t stores and the Gospel isn’t sold, but this story illustrates an opportunity often missed in many churches. Surrounding your church is a community filled with adults who have never heard the Gospel. And naturally, you want to reach them for Christ. So you plan events, provide your members evangelism training, promote your church in every media outlet possible, and try dozens of other ideas to reach the adults in your community.

Yet, in spite of your best efforts, you have touched the lives of very few adults with the good news of the Gospel. In fact, the only thing that seems to have “worked” is your summer VBS program. It helped you connect with non-churched parents who brought their children to your church for VBS for a week. But soon those connections faded away—and so did your chance to reach those adults.

But what if you could repeat that VBS experience week after week? What if every week you were able to interact with non-churched children and their parents? And what if those regular interactions with non-churched families provided the members of your congregation the opportunity to share the Gospel, to bring both children and adults to Christ, and to help new Christians begin their walk with Christ?

Sound too good to be true? It's not!

How do we know? Because this is the story we hear from churches that have chosen to minister to children in their congregation and community each week with one of the several club programs we provide. Our research indicates that nearly half of the children who attend our club programs come from non-churched families. These are families that need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. And through our program and the faithful efforts of people in local churches, many encounter the message of the gospel for the very first time.

Your church can have this same experience. But to do so, you need to start by making children's ministry a top priority. Instead of "shooing kids away" like in the story above, you need to provide a place for them to come, welcome them with open arms and then be prepared to minister to their parents. The opportunity is right in front of you. You just need to choose to take it.

In the pages ahead, we hope to encourage and challenge you to see children's ministry—especially to kids in your community—as critical in reaching both children and adults for Christ. You will hear accounts from churches using Pioneer Clubs' materials and we will share how our programs can make a difference in the lives of children and adults—and in the life of your church. We

do so not to “toot our own horn,” but to open your eyes to what is possible when your church decides to minister to children with a program like ours. It is our hope that you will catch the vision and, whether you use our program or another one like it, that you will see God do mighty things through a midweek children's ministry at your church.

The Importance of Children's Ministry

Ministry to children is critical in the life of any church. Yet when you look at the ministry priorities of many churches, the outward evidence shows otherwise.

Often, children's ministry programs are relegated to the basement of the church or crammed into some tiny, out-of-the-way space. Many churches have no paid staff to lead children's ministry. If they do, the children's ministry director is often underpaid and frequently lacks formal training. These positions are the last to be hired and the first to go when budgets get tight. And research shows that even though 25% of those who attend church are under the age of 12, only 3% of an average church budget is dedicated to its children's ministry. The evidence is overwhelming. It appears that many churches don't seem to believe that reaching the next generation for Christ is all that critical.

But D.L. Moody, the premier American evangelist of the 1800s, understood the value of children in God's kingdom.

Moody arrived home late one evening after preaching at an evangelistic meeting. His wife, Emma, was already asleep in bed. As Moody climbed into bed exhausted from the evening, Emma rolled over and asked, "So how did it go tonight?"

"Pretty well," he replied. "Two and a half converts."

His wife was quiet for a few minutes as she thought about his response, then smiling she said, "That's sweet. How old was the child?"

"No, no, no," Moody answered. "It was two children and one adult! The children have their whole lives in front of them. The adult's life is already half gone."

For those churches whose children's ministry is not as strong as it could be, the response to this account from D.L. Moody's life will be varied. Some pastors and church leaders will read the account above, agree that reaching children at a young age is important Kingdom work, and take steps to strengthen their children's ministry. Others may agree, but for a myriad of reasons will choose not to do anything to change their current ministry to children. And still others will think that this is simply a nice, sentimental story. They believe that other ministry initiatives are far more important for their church than children's ministry and are convinced that reaching teens or adults is much more critical than D.L. Moody would suggest.

No matter what you may think of this account, there are people throughout history who share D.L. Moody's outlook on the importance of influencing the next generation. Consider the following statements from some prominent historic figures:

The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next.

Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted.

If we are to teach real peace in this world . . . we shall have to begin with the children.

He alone, who owns the youth, gains the future.

Each of these quotes affirms the importance of touching the hearts and minds of children at a young age. Like Moody, these prominent figures realized that children have their entire lives ahead of them. And it is clear that each believed that influencing children when they were young would have lasting results.

But these statements couldn't have been made by men with more opposite views on life. The first statement is attributed to Abraham Lincoln while the second was given to us by Vladimir Lenin. Muhatma Gandhi authored the third, while the last was from the mouth of Adolf Hitler.

Whether considered good or evil, each of these men had a practical understanding of the biblical proverb, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." If someone like Hitler understood the importance of capturing the hearts and minds of children when they were young, how much more should we as ambassadors of Christ?

In case you're not yet convinced, there's more. Over the past 30 years research has shown that children are receptive and open to learning about Jesus—more so than adults or teens who tend to be set in

"We have a church in the U.S. in which people do not act like Jesus because they don't think like Jesus, and they don't think like Jesus because they do not possess a Biblical worldview. We may try to combat this problem by focusing our ministry effort on adults, to teach them how to have a Biblical worldview. But the research is proving this to be near impossible. We are focusing on the wrong people....We should be focusing on children in our ministry, prioritizing them."

George Barna
 "Emerging Trends Affecting Ministry:
 Whoever Gets There First, Wins"
 CMAonline, September 2007

their ways and beliefs. We have learned through various studies that nearly 85% of all adult Christians today came to their faith by the time they were 14 years old. In addition, these same studies indicate that once a person turns 30 there is less than a 5% chance that he/she will come to Christ in faith.

And if what you have encountered so far does not provide a compelling argument for the importance of reaching children at an early age, remember the words of Christ. As people were bringing children to see Jesus, His disciples were "shooing them away." In Mark 10:14,15 we read His response, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." He was not pleased with His closest followers who didn't understand how important ministry to children was. And it is hard to imagine that His opinion has changed over the years!

Three Myths about Children's Ministry

Unfortunately, even churches that understand the importance of a strong children's ministry, can easily get caught up believing three common myths about what makes a children's ministry program successful.

Myth #1: An effective ministry to children must include dazzling props, exciting music, and high-tech entertainment—all led by a polished, professional, experienced adult.

Reality: Learning for children is most effective when they actively participate in and are involved with age-appropriate learning experiences. Consider the results of research on what children retain from their learning experiences. They retain:

- 10% of what they read;
- 20% of what they hear;
- 30% of what they see;
- 50% of what they see and hear;
- 70% of what they say;
- 90% of what they say and do.

If all that is required from a children's ministry program is for children to be spectators, this program is not going to help chil-

dren become disciples of Christ. In many ways, a quality program depends more on adults who care and are passionate about ministry to children than any of the bells and whistles that may accompany it. Furthermore, children's basic needs, to be loved and to experience a sense of belonging and security, have not changed over the years.

Myth #2: Children today are socially sophisticated and advanced in their intellectual development.

Reality: Children may have more information today than children of 25-30 years ago because of our high-tech society. But the fact that children learn and grow by moving through certain developmental stages has not changed. Children have not become more sophisticated and intellectual simply because they are exposed to more visual and bite-sized information. Children need discipleship experiences that allow them to be children by providing fun and skill-building experiences appropriate for their age level. And they need adult leaders who love them and know what interests them.

Myth #3: Children should be seen and not heard; therefore, a successful program should be well-structured—adults should lead and children should follow.

Reality: Though this should be obvious, children's programs should be for children—not adults. This doesn't mean that children can do whatever they want and there is no structure. That would be chaos. But children desire to have a sense of achievement in fun, activity-oriented programs. They have gifts and abilities that can be encouraged by allowing them to express those gifts and continue to develop their abilities. So any structure must allow learning to take place through active participation while moving through a sequence of skill-building or content-based (Bible study/Bible memory) learning activities.

So What Does a Vital Children's Ministry Look Like?

So if you agree that children's ministry is important, even critical, in the life of a church—what's next? This is where things get tricky. The reality is that children's ministry programs come in as many varieties as jelly beans.

Some programs, by the very nature of their mission and structure, are meant to serve larger churches, while others are better for small congregations. Some are high-energy and entertaining, while others are serious and thoughtful. What makes a children's ministry effective beyond the walls of a church has nothing to do with the size of church or the nature of the program. What matters is whether the following five basic values are inherent in your children's ministry program.

BASIC VALUES

- 1. A church must believe that ministry to children is just as important as ministry to teens and adults.**

Many churches struggle with making children's ministry a top priority. Why? Because they see children like the entrepreneur at the start of this book. Children aren't decision makers, they don't have financial resources, and they have limited skills and abilities. In business terms the short-term ROI (return on investment) is pretty low for children's ministry.

But you're not running a business. You're a church. And your standard of measurement is not short-term but eternal. So your main goal should be to find a way to integrate children into the nurturing community of believers—the church. The community of Christ must see children as important members of the body of Christ and provide the supportive influences that will continue their discipleship growth. Children must feel they belong; they must be given opportunities to both contribute and to receive as valued members of the church family.

2. A church, through its children's ministry, should provide opportunities for the gifts of children to be expressed and celebrated.

It is amazing how much adults can learn from children. Their faith often puts to shame that of older Christians. Their generosity makes us reconsider how tightly we hold on to our financial resources. Their love and care for the underprivileged and less fortunate puts many adults to shame. Oh, how much we can learn from children when we allow them the opportunity to use their gifts!

3. A church's ministry to children must include both evangelism and discipleship.

When Christ was here on earth He welcomed the children to come and scolded the disciples for hindering them. In this encounter Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." As followers of Christ we must do all we can to introduce children to Him, to explain the good news of the gospel, and to help children make Jesus their Lord and Savior.

But that's just the beginning. We must also teach children to follow Christ in every aspect of life. Christ was abundantly clear when He commanded, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." This command has no age limit. There's no focus on adults. So children are to be discipled. An effective children's ministry will see both evangelism and discipleship as critical.

4. A church must be willing to invest time into the lives of children.

As you consider strengthening your children's ministry to reach your community, do not underestimate the importance of time! A midweek club program like ours requires an investment. Kids need time. Discipleship takes time. And relationships require time—both peer to peer and adult to peer—to develop. A midweek club program allows the time that most children's ministries don't.

Many children's ministry programs today are condensed and compacted. Take vacation Bible school, for instance. Your church has only one week in the summer to build a relationship with a child and, potentially, that child's family. A midweek club program, however, provides consistent, ongoing opportunities to engage the non-churched family (adult and child) throughout the year.

Or consider Sunday school. Originally, an hour or more in length, the time for Sunday School at many churches continues to shrink. And for some churches it has become non-existent. In its place are programs that keep kids entertained and amused while their parents attend the church service. How can you possibly have an impact on a child's life without the time it takes to build healthy relationships?

The very hallmark of midweek club programs like Pioneer Clubs is relational ministry. The children in our club programs count on dedicated adults who know them, care for them and nurture them each and every week. And with Pioneer Clubs, children aren't asked to sit and listen. They actively participate both in Bible Exploration and in activities that help them build important life skills.

All of these components allow the time needed for children and adults to interact and build a sense of community.

5. A church's children's ministry must involve the family.

Scripture is abundantly clear that families are the key vehicle for the spiritual formation of children. Therefore, an effective ministry to children must do everything it can to empower the family structure. A church can be a key partner in this process, but ultimately the responsibility to train up children lies with parents.

However, not every family is willing or able to assume such a role in a child's life. So the church must be prepared to assume the role of surrogate family, when necessary, to replant the vision of family in children who come from incomplete or dysfunctional families. The goal is that as these children grow into adulthood, they will model the family that God intended.

Instill these values into your children's ministry and you will see amazing things take place.

Reaching Your Community!

How churches reach non-churched children and their parents has changed substantially over the past several decades. Years ago Sunday school served as the major outreach tool to reach children. Non-churched parents were open to allowing their children to attend church on Sunday mornings with neighbors, friends or other family members, even though they had no interest in going to church themselves. Some of these parents thought that church would be a positive influence in their child's life, while others were just happy to have a few free hours on Sunday morning. And since there was nothing else for their children to do on Sunday mornings, church was a good option.

But today, that's no longer the case. The 60s saw a generation push back against those in authority and the church was one of those institutions that took a hit. Over the years, parents who do not attend church themselves have become increasingly wary of sending their children to church on Sunday mornings. And with the increase of kids' activities that are scheduled on Sundays, Sunday school is no longer the outreach tool it once was. Across the country, the traditional Sunday school "hour" is being compressed. Competition from outside influences such as team sports has cut into the number of children attending each week. Fewer churches are using age-graded curriculum and instead are opting to combine age groups. Furthermore, Sunday school curriculum

is moving away from a sequential Bible knowledge focus to a topical approach. Nowadays, Sunday school is attended primarily by church members' children—and even those numbers are shrinking.

If this is true, how can you possibly reach your community through children's ministry?

A recent research study, the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (www.uscongregations.org), examined the impact of sixteen different variables on numerical growth in churches. Not one of the control variables (congregational size, average age or income of worshipers, percentage of male/female worshipers, theology of the congregation or local population growth) were related to numerical growth. So what does influence growth? There are three variables that proved to be the best positive predictors of growth. They are:

- Caring for young people
- Participation in the ministry of the church
- Welcoming new people

In essence, a church that obviously has a heart for children, provides opportunities for people to actively participate in ministry, and warmly welcomes outsiders is one that is most likely to reach its community. What this study shows is that a ministry like Pioneer Clubs, which fulfills these top three predictors of growth, can help a church reach its community for Christ.

Think about it. To begin with, a midweek children's ministry program is an outward and visible statement to your community that your church has chosen to invest in the lives of children—both those who attend your church as well as those in the community. Some of our strongest club programs are those which are run primarily to serve the community. One church in Reno,

Nevada with average attendance of less than 150 on Sunday mornings, ministers each week to nearly 100 kids in their community. They identified the need for an after-school program on Wednesdays and decided to start a club. Scores of non-churched kids started to attend—and this church now has the opportunity to reach their families for Christ—all because they showed they truly care for young people.

Second, the structure of a children's club ministry, and Pioneer Clubs in particular, provides dozens of opportunities for adults to actively participate in ministry. From serving as a club leader, to organizing activities or snacks, to assisting with Bible memory, the volunteer positions within the club program are limited only by imagination. Even better, members of your church as well as non-churched parents are likely to help out since parents often lend a hand with their child's activities.

And finally, the Pioneer Clubs' environment is a naturally welcoming one. Non-churched parents will easily connect with parents who attend church through a natural common denominator—their children. If you watch a group of parents interact you'll quickly see how background, age and other usual barriers are quickly erased when it comes to talking about their children and parenting issues.

Disciples making disciples is God's plan for church growth—not programs, methods or the church "service." With a quality children's ministry program like Pioneer Clubs, the members of your congregation become those disciples making disciples—one person-to-person contact at a time. The result is a church that is reaching its community for Christ.

Will a Club Program Work at Our Church?

In many churches, children's ministry programs continue to operate on a paradigm based upon adult education models," note Vicki Stoecklin and Randy White in *Developing an Effective Children's Ministry Program*. "However, children are not small adults. Rather, they have unique needs, capabilities and learning styles. An effective children's ministry program requires an understanding and recognition of...the characteristics of children's growth, development, needs and cognitive/learning abilities."

Below is a 10-point check list of the vital component to a well-rounded children's ministry program.

- Is it fun? Creative? Engaging?
- Do children want to be there?
- Does the program enable a child to enter into a personal relationship with Christ and know his Word?
- Does it encourage children to form healthy relationships?
- Does it help children grow as whole persons?
- Does it enable adults to understand children and help them develop?
- Are the meeting plans easy to use by busy volunteers?
- Are club activities attractive and meaningful to children?

- Does the curriculum allow adults the chance to develop friendships with children?
- How much emphasis is placed on external rewards compared to personal development and relationships?

At Pioneer Clubs our programs allow children to develop new skills; experience success and challenge and make choices based on biblical principles. Most importantly, kids have fun while they do these things.

As children participate in our programs, they will understand that Christianity is a lifestyle. They will form healthy relationships with peers and adult Christian role models. And they will develop positive feelings about themselves so they can comprehend how God could love them.

Pioneer Clubs offers kids an effective tool for discipleship. It is a wonderful way to involve Christian kids in spiritual growth. It teaches them how to share their faith and live out Christian values in everyday situations. And Christian principles are discussed and taught in terms of what a child can and should do about it NOW.

Typically, Sunday school today reaches church families. Pioneer Clubs program, with its more casual environment and by not being on Sunday morning, appeals to church and non-church kids. Kids feel more comfortable inviting other kids to club as opposed to Sunday school. And as we have already mentioned, nearly 50% of the children that attend our clubs come from non-church families.

GETTING UNCHURCHED PARENTS IN THE DOOR

According to research, only 0.5% of those who are non-church cite a mass evangelism effort as the reason they decided

to come to a church. So what brings people to church? The same research indicates that non-churched people are most likely to first visit a church because of a friend or relative. A children's club program, like Pioneer Clubs, attracts parents because they are being influenced to come by a relative—their child.

When a child from a non-churched family comes to a children's club program at your church, that child doesn't come alone. In most cases, either a mother or father will drop off or pick up that child. Since most club members are in elementary school, it's very likely that children from non-churched families will be escorted into your church building. There you have it—an adult who does not know Christ inside your church! Don't let that opportunity slip away!

So how do you maximize this parent connection? You start by offering ways that non-churched parents can become involved in your church on a regular basis. Research shows that new Christians who remain committed to their new-found faith were exposed to the gospel an average of six times prior to their conversion. Those who made a commitment but fell away were exposed to the gospel, on average, only two times.

Start by encouraging the parents of children who attend your church to build relationships with non-churched parents. A program like Pioneer Clubs creates an environment where parents naturally meet other parents. The activities of children form the basis of many parent-to-parent friendships. And research indicates that when people come to Christ they are most likely to grow in their faith because they developed meaningful relationships with other Christians prior to conversion. So get parents involved in the process.

Another way you can build on this new connection is to establish strong entry paths to your church for non-churched parents. Entry paths can be a church-sponsored program, group, or activity in which a non-churched adult can become involved and interact with Christian adults on a regular basis. An entry path is an ongoing function in which a non-churched adult can develop a long-term relationships with people in the church in a non-threatening environment. Most people come to faith in Christ and subsequently join a church through the influence of a friend, neighbor, or relative. Your goal with an entry path is to provide an opportunity for your members to develop friendships and relationships with the non-churched people who walk into your church as they bring their children to your club program.

As you build entry paths for non-churched parents be sure to consider these seven characteristics of a good entry path:

- The group/activity interests members and non-members.
- The activity is low risk and requires little commitment.
- It is held in a neutral meeting place.
- Prospects are personally invited.
- Time is spent building and nurturing personal relationships in the group.
- The group is composed of people who share things in common.
- The benefit is perceived to be greater than the cost.

MEETING THEIR NEEDS

Effective evangelism begins with felt needs. One of the great motivating needs of non-churched Americans today is healthy

family relationships. Parents, both inside and outside of your church, are looking for answers to the challenge of sensible parenting in an increasingly senseless world. Scripture has great insights about building healthy relationships and growing healthy families. Family and child-rearing issues can be the “spark” to re-ignite spiritual interest in those who don’t currently attend church.

Single parents and blended families can find unique need-meeting resources within the community of the local church.

Several ideas to consider for an entry path to your church are:

- Marital and/or Parenting Class
- Bible Study Class
- Church Sports League(s)
- Aerobics Class
- Divorce Recovery Support Group
- Single Moms Group
- MOPS Program
- Craft/Scrapbooking Night
- All Church Family Night

WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC OF YOUR CHURCH

Walking through your doors each week could be the non-churched parents of non-churched children who attend a children’s club program at your church. Reaching them will require a church-wide effort. Encourage church staff and members to get involved in your club program and connect with the non-churched parents who walk through your doors. Challenge and encourage everyone in your congregation to look beyond the walls of your church and

see a community full of people who need to hear about Christ. And above all, pray that God will use your local church to make a difference in the lives of those He has placed in your community.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Encouraging Accounts of What God Can Do

FIRST BAPTIST - TOWN CREEK, ALABAMA

First Baptist is a church made up of primarily older people. Even though they had NO children attending their church they decided to start a Pioneer Clubs program. In their first year, this local church ministered to 66 kids who came to club and saw 29 kids make a decision to follow Christ.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - LEMMON, SOUTH DAKOTA

Reformed Presbyterian runs a club of 40-50 kids in a small town in ranching territory where many families live in more remote locations. This church takes advantage of a 4-day school week and runs a Friday morning club. They draw kids from a variety of church backgrounds, as well as those with no church affiliation. When their new pastor started the church had no children's ministry, even on Sunday morning. So this club has been a blessing to them.

ABUNDANT HOPE CHRISTIAN CENTER - DOWNEY, CALIFORNIA

We're a small Church, about 60 members, and we're so glad that in the past year, we've seen more a more neighbors joining us. Most of the kids live nearby (across the street or couple of blocks away), and their parents have been coming to Church as a result of the program! Bless God!

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER - MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Eleven of our kids are from the inner city, and their parents do not come to our church. However, six of the kids are picked up and come regularly on Sunday mornings. This past Sunday evening the church hosted a "Festival of Gifts" and four of our city kids sang songs (2 duets) that they had learned in Pioneer Club. God is so good to allow us to see His work in these lives. They all come from homes where the parents or older sibling have been in trouble with the law, so God has granted us the privilege of seeing the seeds of change begin for these families. We praise and thank Him for that and pray that He will continue His good work. So you can see that even though we are small, God is working in our church and in our city with the help of the Pioneer Clubs material. We are thankful to all of you who support us behind the scenes as we seek to bring the light of Jesus into the lives of children.

WAKEFIELD VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH - NEW WINDSOR, MARYLAND

This church in rural Maryland ministers to about 35 kids through their weekly club program. The majority of the children that attend come from the community—a small town of 1,300. Recently, they have seen several neighborhood families, whose only connection has been with their Pioneer Clubs program, start to attend their church regularly.

NACOGDOCHES CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP - NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

So many of our Scooters and our Discovery club kids come from a Christian foster home/ranch. These children have come from some really awful environments and most have never heard about Jesus at all—at least not in a good way. With Pioneer Clubs now they have!

ST. LUKES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - HARRISVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA

This small church stepped out by faith to start a club program. They had stopped running most of their children's programs, including Sunday school, because so few children were attending. After starting a club program, now have over 20 children coming on Sunday nights—mostly from non-churched families. They had a Thanksgiving Dinner the Sunday before Thanksgiving and all of these non-churched families came. This has revolutionized the church. Older folks, who had not volunteered in years, are working in the club. There's a whole new spark throughout the church. Everyone at the church is excited; a whole new attitude is within the church. They know that God is doing something special in their midst.

EVANGEL WORSHIP CENTER - CONCORD, NORTH CAROLINA

Not all children have the privilege of being taught the bible at home and so teaching scripture effectively at church can sometimes be challenging. Now, we are so happy to have finally found the right curriculum to best minister effectively to such children. On Wednesday evenings we bus in about 45 Spanish children via a 15 passenger van. We have searched for a curriculum that best meets the needs of that community. What a joy to finally see the children opening up the Word of God and learning so much each week. The curriculum is fun, interactive, and is easy to understand.

A few weeks ago while teaching a lesson called "Joining God's Family" taught from the "Discovering Gods Goodness" curriculum... Three children got saved! Three kids accepted Jesus as Savior. We know it was the Holy Spirit that worked in their hearts to accept Jesus! Thank You for offering such wonderful products that help children to know the Lord! We are so rejoicing! Hallelujah!

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - BELLE VERNON , PENNSYLVANIA

We started about a year and half ago, but only had 4 children attending on a regular basis. The local school would not give us permission to advertise because we were not part of the school. Our own children's Sunday school had dwindled down to three students, two of whom are the children of the woman who helps me with Pioneer Clubs. With heavy heart we put our own children's Sunday school on hiatus and decided to put all our efforts into Pioneer Clubs. We petitioned the local elementary school to see if we could have the club as an after school club in the school. About a week before school started we were given permission to hold the club at the school and were given permission to advertise the club in the school. We thought perhaps we would get 10 or 12 kids and to our delight we had around 24 children that began attending. In fact news of the club spread to the second elementary school in town and I received a phone call asking if we would do the club there also.

We had our first badge ceremony and decided to do a Christmas program along with handing out awards. I think we must have had close to 100 people at our badge ceremony that evening. The kids were excited and the parents were very appreciative of the work with the children. Needless to say it has been a roller coaster ride for us and one that has us convinced that this is the direction children's ministry should take in our church.

To learn more about how you can reach
your community with the help of Pioneer Clubs, call

800.694.CLUB (2582)

or visit

www.pioneerclubs.org