

NEWS FROM LYNNE PABST

Our Certified Christian Educator and POINT Partner

Thoughts About Fall and A New Curriculum

I know the summer is still before us, but it is time to start thinking about Fall 2020 and what it may look like. Christian Educators, all educators in fact, think six months to a year in advance. On summer vacations, we gather items for units to be taught in January and in the cold months of January we are thinking about outdoor summer experiences. Our closets are full of “I’ll need this in 2 years” things. (Believe me I have pulled more things out of that closet during this pandemic than you would have thought.) This Christian Educator characteristic may sometimes be frustrating for pastors and Sessions who feel hounded by the Christian Educator to think ahead. But with Christian Educator forethought and administrative last minuteness, a happy medium in which the Spirit works miracles occurs. I have so enjoyed watching this play out within the churches I have worked.

While things still remain undetermined due to the COVID 19 pandemic, we need to get prepared and look at what our options are for fall. We need to be flexible and have a Plan A and B, maybe even C. Some churches will try opening Sunday School back up with safety precautions in place, others will not want to take the risk, others may have found a new way of Christian education as a result of the COVID 19. Even in my county of Montour which so far has had very few case numbers, I am hearing many mixed responses from medical people and from families as to their response to going green. With freedom comes much responsibility. As was done with summer activities, churches need to continue to examine theological, ecclesiastical, and practical freedoms and responsibilities.

As your POINT partner and contributor to this project, I bring to your attention a new curriculum for review as you reflect on plans for Fall. The *“Growing in God’s Love”* Curriculum comes available in July. Designed to be used alongside the *“Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible”*, this curriculum’s unique design makes it flexible for these uncertain times.

Inexpensive: Compared to many other curricula it is inexpensive and within the price range of many smaller churches. These units are undated and reusable.

Develop Your Own Sequence: You get to create your sequence by what themes you purchase. No longer are you confined to the traditional: First Quarter of Creation and Old Testament; Second Quarter of Jesus’ Birth and Life; Third Quarter of Easter to Pentecost; and Fourth Quarter a mix of Old Testament and Life of Paul. You now can create a sequence which fits into the rest of your Christian education program.

Purchase only what you need: You are not committed to purchasing a whole quarter (15 lessons) at a time. A unit of 3, 4 or 5 sessions from a selection of theme units is purchased. You are then free to use it as you wish. A 4-session unit could last 4 months if the group meets only once a month or it could cover one month of weekly Sunday school. In July 2020, six themes are available with 35 themes available by end of 2021. A church may think it will need to have

virtual Sunday school and then decide to go in-person. Since only one unit was purchased, a church could go back to using its other materials.

Online and in-person options: The curriculum can be purchased in a hardcopy or a downloadable (less expensive) version. Then within the sessions there are some online ideas and in-person ideas.

Accompanies Children's Bible: This curriculum accompanies the *"Growing in God's Love: Story Bible"* which many churches have already adopted for use in the Sunday School room or as a gift to the family of preschoolers as a first Bible. There is nothing more frustrating than picking up a story Bible and the story for your lesson not be in it. These sessions are directly aligned with the stories in that story Bible.

Multi-age: Written with the 5- to 10-year-old age group in mind, the strong intergenerational component makes it easy to extend a few years in either direction. This makes it perfect for the smaller church needing to combine age groups due to low number of children or volunteers. This also makes it useful for a mid-week children's club.

Strong Intergenerational Component: Within each unit there are intergenerational, family, worship, and educational extensions. This supports children in worship, family faith experiences, and larger group gatherings making connections between all aspects of church life. Should the Sunday school need to be within the home due to COVID 19, it is easily adapted.

A New Approach: I save this one for last as I feel it is the most important. While many of the curricula written over the past 30 years has focused on keeping the children active and making certain that the volunteer does not run out of ideas, *"Growing in God's Love"* focuses on intentional teaching presenting fewer ideas with greater focus and on student reflection providing opportunity for the child to pause and think about what has been heard. In our busy world even midst the pandemic (think I have been busier during stay at home than I was before), children need space to pause and quiet self. In a world of current events and media shouting and telling us what to think, children need space to think about what God is saying. This curriculum, whether used at home or in person or online or on Sundays or mid-week, guides the adult and the child into these two spaces with God's story.

Available: *"Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible"* and *"Growing in God's Love Curriculum"* are available through the Presbyterian Church (USA) store. See the websites below for prices, themes, and more information.

Resources:

Prices and Ordering: <https://www.pcusastore.com/Pages/Item/13638/Story-Bible-Curriculum.aspx>

Powerpoint on the Curriculum:

https://www.pcusastore.com/Content/Site119/Basics/13638StoryBible_00000141491.pdf

Other Resources: <https://mailchi.mp/wjkbooks/qivrcd82mv-1141304?e=3219f3057b>

Blessings! Stay Safe! Happy Fall Planning!