

Big Ideas

Big Ideas For Smaller Children's Ministries

Steve & Cora Alley

God is **BIG!** He is powerful and able to do amazing things through small people, small efforts or small ministries! Remember what Jesus did with one small boy's lunch? Remember what God did with one small stone in Goliath's sling?

The size of the children's ministry (CM) in which you serve is "just the right size" for what God wants to accomplish in your area!

Instead of viewing your CM through the "lens" of comparison to other churches' CM programs, ask God to help you see the wonderful benefits of being "small." Here are some things that larger CM programs would love to have; but they have grown so large that they now have to deal with the temptation to be more "corporate" than "personal."

Being Smaller Has Its Advantages!

1. Greater church-wide awareness of the children in your ministry.
2. Greater opportunities for children to express their faith.
3. Greater probability that the children will take an active roll in the ministry and in leadership opportunities.
4. Increased contact with the parents of the children.
5. Greater, more personal contact between the children and children's ministry team members.
6. Greater flexibility regarding planning and changing the program or ministry.

One of the greatest advantages of being small is being able to know every child's name!

"...He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

1John 4:4

“Giants” Who May Threaten A Children’s Ministry

Every children’s ministry, no matter how large or small, faces similar challenges. The smaller children’s ministry may be tempted to believe that their size limits their potential impact on the lives of children. Just as the giant Goliath challenged the Israelite army, we too are challenged by some threatening “giants” of perspective!

These “Giants”

Want You To Believe These Misconceptions

The “giant” of Not enough VISION	<i>“We can’t create new programs!”</i>
The “giant” of Not enough MONEY	<i>“We can’t afford it!”</i>
The “giant” of Not enough VOLUNTEERS	<i>“Nobody wants to help!”</i>
The “giant” of Not enough CURRICULUM	<i>“We don’t know where to start!”</i>
The “giant” of Not enough FACILITIES	<i>“We don’t have room for that!”</i>

Kill Your “Giants” With Help From God And Others!

Just as David killed Goliath, you have to stand and face the “giants” that you face as a smaller children’s ministry (CM) in the power of God Almighty! This doesn’t mean that you will “defeat” the size of your church or your CM; it simply means that you will defeat the misconceptions that you might be tempted to believe. Your perspectives will be strengthened as you kill your “giants”!

Help From God

Jeremiah 33:3

“Call to Me and I will answer and show you great and unsearchable things you do not know. “

Help From Others

Proverbs 27:17

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. “

Load Your “S-L-I-N-G” For Giant-killing!

Just as David prepared for a victory, you need to prepare for a victory over a “we can’t do it” perspective. Instead, you should see the great things associated with your small CM size! Here are things that you can load into your fresh perspective “SLING”:



Conquering The Giant of “Not Enough **VISION**”



SEE through God’s eyes
for solutions and new ideas!



1. Re-think your ministry **GOALS** with “no-limit” thinking.
Try a “Double-Vision” planning retreat.
2. **FOCUS** on your uniqueness and excel at it.
3. **READ** children’s ministry magazines and websites for insights.
4. **DARE** to take your children’s ministry in new directions!

“Double Your Vision” for Children’s Ministry

FAMILY SUPPORT

Family Worship Services

- Family worship service
- Children’s bulletin
- Children as ushers/greeters
- Children as praise leaders
- Children do special music
- Children read scripture
- Children’s sermon moment
- Children’s songs
- Simple Bible translation
- Sermon terms identified

Family Fun Outings

- Family camp outs
- Family “movie” night
- Family picnics / Olympics
- Family service projects
- Family field trip adventures
- Family road rallies

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

- VBS-type program
- Day camp (half day)
- Weekly “Summer Fun”
- Established camp
- AWANA-type program
- Exciting guest experiences

PARENT SUPPORT

Parent Seminars

- Spiritual Development of Child
- Raising A Peaceful Child
- Raising A Disciplined Child
- Raising A Discerning Child
- Raising A Confident Child
- Raising A Godly Child
- Raising A Bold Child
- Dealing With “Hot” Issues

Parent Communication

- Parent notes at CM services
- Online and social media sites
- Emails and texts
- Parent pamphlets in CM hallway
- CM hallway video screens

Parent Events

- Parents’ night out events
- Mother support meetings (MOPS)
- Father / child events
- Mother / child events

After School Program

- At church facility
- Transportation assistance

Conquering The Giant of “Not Enough **MONEY**”



LOOK for resources in new places

Instead of letting money limit your ministry!

God is the leader and founder of every ministry! It is His wisdom that leads the ministry! It is His provision that “fuels” the ministry! Having said this, you have to be a good steward of what He has given you and do all you can to multiply your connections. A smaller ministry needs to develop community connections that can supplement what God has provided. This is okay as long as you don’t shift your “allegiance” from God to others. No matter who supports the ministry, God is the ultimate provider! Here are some ways to go beyond the budget:



1. Involve children and adults in **FUND-RAISING**.

People naturally enjoy giving to a specific cause or need, rather than a general “we need money” plea. (Check the policy regarding fund-raising at your church. Ask your supervisor or senior pastor, then consider the ideas below.)

CAUTION!

Children must not be left alone to go “door-to-door” or on any other fund-raising venture!

Fund-Raising Ideas

- Car washes
- Spare change collection drives
- Grinder / hot dog & soft drink sales on Super Bowl Sunday
- All-church skate night (rent the facility and all proceeds go to children's ministry)
- All-church miniature golf night (same as skate night)
- All-church pizza night (same as skate night)
- Children’s recipe book sales (collect the children’s favorite recipes, bind and sell)
- Pre-wrapped Christmas box sales (pre-wrap boxes with children, sell at Christmas time)
- Children’s ministry “coffee houses” (sell espresso, lattes, etc. before or after church services)
- Flower sales on Mother’s Day, etc.
- Children’s ministry art sale (collect children's art, sell after church service)

2. Operate **FEE-BASED** programs.

- Include bus rental fees in the cost
- Include entrance fees in the cost
- Include equipment or supply fees. Include “guest speaker” fees.

3. Ask for **DONATIONS**.

Where To Get “Freebies”

- Printing companies (*they will donate “end of the rolls” of paper*).
- Local merchants, especially church members (*they may donate what they sell*).
- Construction workers, especially church members (*they may donate their time and skill*).
- The entire church body (*ask them to donate certain items, especially craft supplies*).
- Local artists, especially church members (*they may donate photography, video work, or painting*).

4. Take advantage of **DISCOUNTS**.

- From Christian suppliers (bookstores, publishers).
- Assign “Garage Sale Shoppers.”
- From local merchants after holidays.
- Send shoppers to clearance sales after each season.



5. Learn how to make an effective **BOARD** presentation.

- Congregational survey
- Needs assessment
- Brochure, logo
- Benefits to church
- Suggested budget

6. **ORGANIZE** what you do have.

- Assign space for a supply room
- Recruit a supply room coordinator
- Maintain the equipment and furniture with volunteers
- Find, use, or throw away (sell?) unused “lost” items



Conquering The Giant of “Not Enough **VOLUNTEERS**”



INVOLVE all ages in ministry
if your workforce is low!

1. **ADVERTISE** smaller support positions
 - Change the perception that everyone “teaches.”
 - Create a process through which supervised youth serve in the CM.
 - Welcome the elderly to serve in the CM.
 - Highlight specific “openings.”

Specific CM Team “Openings”

“Children’s ministry is more than a lesson plan.”

- Hallway assistants / greeters
- Classroom greeters
- Arts & crafts assistants
- “Image” and advertising team members
- Supply room volunteers
- Information booth volunteers
- Field trip team members
- Video team members
- Camp team members
- Infant rockers
- Story tellers
- Drama team members
- Phone callers
- Letter, card, email communications
- Shoppers (garage sales experts)
- Worship team
- Hospitality team (CM training, encouragement)
- Security team
- Special event teams (VBS, camps, holidays, etc.)

CM Youth Trainee Program

For 12-16-year-olds

A program between the youth ministry (YM) and children’s ministry (CM) through which qualified youth serve in the CM under the supervision of both the YM and CM leaders. Basic requirements for enrollment:

- A growing relationship with the Lord (letters of recommendation).
- Regular church attendance for 2 years.
- Recommended by a youth leader.
- Must agree to attend a youth Bible study while serving in the CM.
- Application includes a written form and an interview.
- Once accepted, the youth begins the training.
- Serves 4 weeks in a class as an aide (3 yr-olds - 4th grade)
- Supervised and evaluated each week by a “Master Teacher.”
- Once “graduated” the youth may join the CM team.

2. **ADVERTISE** fun programs that will attract new volunteers

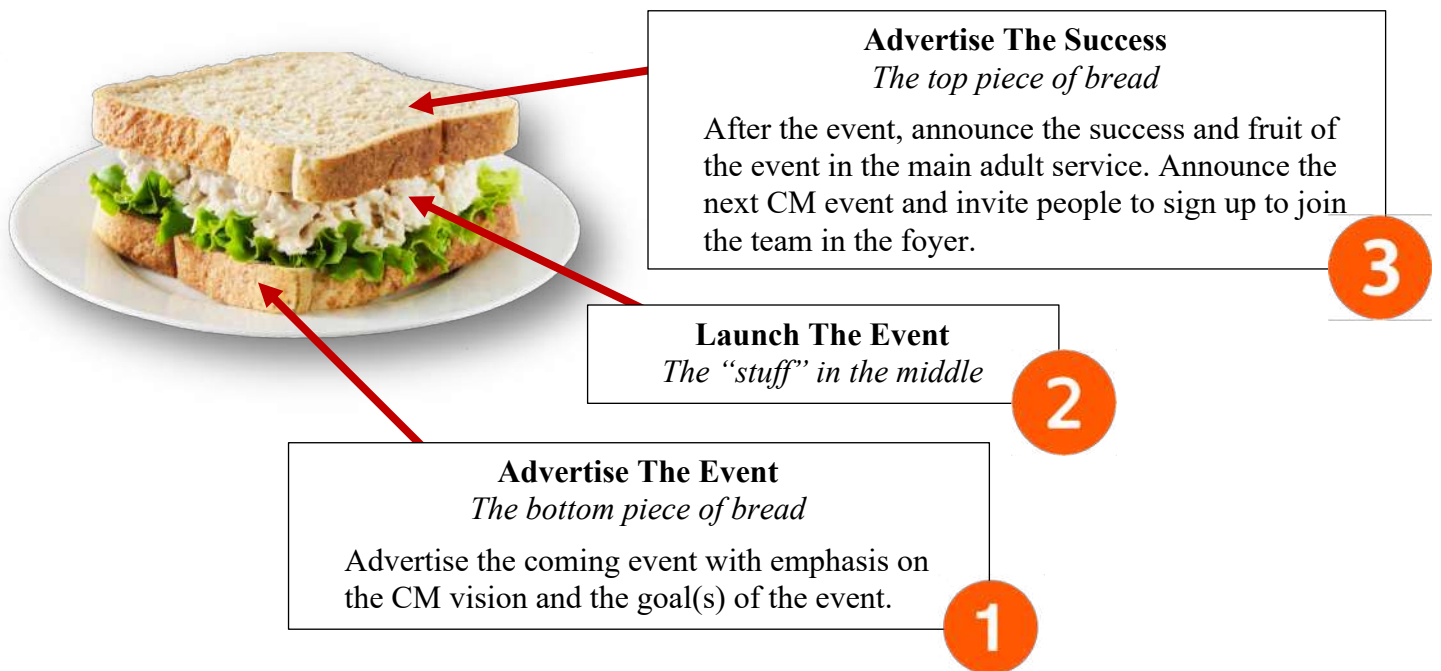
Fun Programs To Attract New Volunteers

- Zoo trips
- Games at the park
- Formal tea parties (girls)
- Video/computer game tournaments
- Movie night at the church
- Real snow at the church
- Potluck dinners
- Bike trips
- Miniature golf nights
- Parents' night out
- Car rallies
- Skill classes
- Petting zoo at the church
- Visits to local farms
- Picnics
- Paintball / paintball games
- Puppet shows
- Ice skating
- Field trips to local factories, etc.
- Workdays at the church
- Bowling nights
- VBS or camp programs
- Carnivals
- Talent shows
- Camp outs at the church
- Special guests or "stars"

3. **HIGHLIGHT** events and victories, and recruit for the next event!

The "Sandwich Principle"

Use the success of an event or program to attract new volunteers to join the CM team!



4. **RECRUIT** positively on a regular basis, rather only when "needed"

Recruiting Ideas

As always, screen ALL volunteers carefully!

- Invite the senior pastor to validate the value of the CM.
- Emphasize the privilege of ministry, don't beg.
- Don't use words like, "need more help" instead use "openings."
- Have applications available at all times.
- Create a logo, vision statement, slogan, etc.
- Create a brochure and have them available all over church grounds.
- Ask team members to recruit friends (join the team!).
- Recruit for short periods of time, then guaranteed time off (3 mo.).
- Invite parents to visit classes on special days.
- Have regular testimonies in the adult service ("live" or taped).
- Advertise options for volunteers other than teaching.
- "Display the fruit," rather than moan about the needs.

5. **TRAIN**, apprentice, and group new team members.

- Train based on rotation plan (every 3 or 6 months)
- Apprentice new team members for a 2 or 3-month period.
- Create teach-teaching in the CM

6. **ROTATE** your volunteers every 3 to 6 months to prevent burn-out!

- Options during rotation = A complete rest, or join substitute list
- Rotation is a great recruiting tool
- Option to change age groups after rotation

7. **EQUIP** volunteers with:

- Good training
- Team teaching
- Adequate supplies

8. **AFFIRM** all volunteers through:

- Teacher appreciation functions
- Public affirmation during service
- Team member profiles in bulletin or on website
- Refreshments during service
- Highlight them at meetings
- Apprenticeship period
- Good curriculum
- Good communication (coordinators)
- Child testimonies
- Personal thanks (words, cards, emails)
- People-friendly coordinators



Conquering The Giant of “Not Enough **CURRICULUM**”



NETWORK with others

for new curriculum and program ideas!

Network For Curriculum

1. Network with **OTHERS**

- Ask larger churches for unused curriculum
- Ask Christian bookstores for discontinued, or out-dated curriculum
- Form curriculum writing teams by grade level

Principles of Curriculum Writing

- Seek out credentialed teachers in the congregation.
- Organize “brainstorm” sessions (socials, dinners, retreats).
- Create writing teams by grade level and add to ideas each year.
- Build on content each year.
- Begin sections (quarters?) with special events that set the theme.
- Create an “idea library.”
- Collect craft, game, object lesson, and project books for resources.
- Approve all curriculum – no maverick writers.
- Create a “scope and sequence” (what you will teach, in what order).
- Each lesson should contain:
 - Lesson objective (learner-focused).
 - Age-level appropriate words, activities.
 - Use of audio, visual, tactile, experiential experiences and Methods.
 - Clear lesson divisions (attention-getter, content discovery, activity, application).
 - “80/20” rule (80% learner interaction, 20% teacher talk).
- Create a professional layout with graphics, etc.
- Edit using church volunteers.
- Review, evaluate, and rewrite curriculum to increase effectiveness.

2. Search your **PUBLIC LIBRARY** and **ONLINE** for content.

- Children’s books with value stories – add scriptural content.
- Lesson ideas.
- Application ideas.
- Video clips (Wingclips.com or Youtube)
- Christian heroes or missionary stories

3. **ADAPT** the curriculum you have.
 - Reuse or rework to improve or “freshen.”
 - Modify lessons for one age group to suit another.
4. Use **REPRODUCIBLE** booklets or low-cost items as curriculum.
“Godly people with a vision and passion for children are the real curriculum!”

Low-cost or Free Curriculum Items

- Restaurant menus – use to discuss options and choices in life.
- Directions (paper or on boxes) – use to discuss following scripture.
- Spelling textbooks – use to discuss memorizing God’s Word.
- Church bulletins – use to discuss following God’s “program.”
- Newspaper – use to discuss choices/consequences in life (sin).
- Newspaper – use to discuss God’s existence / views in world.
- Junk mail – use to discuss discernment, Godly priorities.
- Real Estate magazines – use to discuss “home” (heaven/earth).
- Sale flyers from stores – use to discuss “wants” vs. “needs.”
- Online sites (carefully screened) talk about options or discernment.

Network For Fellowship And Program Ideas

1. Organize CM fellowships among the churches in your area for ideas and encouragement.
 - Connect via phone or email
 - Share challenges, victories, solutions, ideas
 - Meet together socially on a regular basis
 - Share prayer needs
 - Attend local ministry conventions and seminars
2. Join with other small churches and organize shared events
 - VBS
 - Camps
 - Special guests
 - Seasonal events (Halloween, Easter, Christmas, etc.)



Conquering The Giant of “Not Enough **FACILITIES**”

G **GO** beyond your facilities *when you run out of room!*

Unless you are blessed to serve at a church that is growing to the point of building new facilities, you probably have to do the best you can with the facility you have. It is fun to walk around your facility as if you were doing it for the first time. Ask God to show you areas that aren't being used well, or areas that can be refurbished to be more productive. Look for facility options outside of your own building.

1. Share facilities with other **CHURCHES** or schools by staggering meeting times.
 - Youth meet in the afternoon at another church's gym.
 - Share an auditorium for special programs
 - Contact Seventh Day Adventist churches for Sunday possibilities
2. Look for other places to meet in **TOWN**.
3. Encourage adults to meet in local **HOMES** or businesses for Sunday school. This may free up some classroom space for children's classes.
4. Change meeting **TIMES** and **PLACES** to free up rooms.
 - Children meet while adults are in service
 - Turn a hallway into a classroom
 - Meet outside if possible (tents, etc.)
 - Use church bus as a classroom
5. **COMBINE** classes or develop a large group program.
 - Hold children's church with small groups in corners of the room
 - Combine classes within same grade levels
 - Create partitions in large room to separate grade levels
6. Enlist the help of church members in giving existing facilities a **FACE-LIFT**.
 - Painting
 - Planting
 - Building
 - Organizing
 - Cleaning
 - Stocking
7. Design **PROGRAMS** that don't require facilities.
 - Big Brother / Big Sister programs
 - Day camps
 - Field trips
8. **REMOVE** classroom chairs or tables to open up some classroom space (as a last resort).

