



Dear Parents & Grandparents:

Welcome to the first edition of the Children's Worship newsletter. We are in the 6th month of **JAM** and wanted to communicate our excitement about the real difference **JAM** is making!

When we consider the critical elements in spiritual formation for children, I believe there are three essential elements linked to each other. They are teaching the faith, leading children in worship, and guiding children to make their own confession of faith.

The first element is teaching the content of the faith which is concerned with:

*Who is God? What is His character? How does God relate to us?*

*What do we believe and why? For belief under girds action.*

*What are the actions of faith? Here are the moral imperatives that guide our conduct.*

The third element is helping a child make their own confession of faith.

*Here they make faith personal by inviting Jesus to be Lord of their life. This opens up a sense of God's presence through the Holy Spirit that can become a guide for a child's life.*

The first and third elements are taught and widely understood and practiced within the life of the church at large as they should be. But the *second* element is less well understood. Yet, it is the vital link that leads from the first element to the third more naturally.

The second element is leading children in worship. The first element is knowledge based, but the second element is experientially based. Both knowledge and experience are combined in a confession of faith. What worship helps is the transition from knowledge to relationship as a child grows there is a critical transition that is taking place in many aspects of their life. No less so than in the matter of faith. It is building a solid relationship with their Creator, Redeemer, and Guide for life that will be foundational for all their other relationships.

What is it that we are trying to do when we lead children in worship? I believe it is based on four principles of worship.

1. **Worship is Praising God.**

Music is often the vehicle, but it is giving thanks, remembering all God's blessings and actions in our lives. It is actively cultivating a sense of gratitude as we give expression, with voice, hands, and motion. Praise comes from the heart.

2. **Worship is Prayer.**

It is talking with God. It is bringing our concerns, our cares, our questions to God. But it is also listening to God. Listening for His voice that we can hear in scripture and through His spirit.

### 3. **Worship is Proclamation.**

Proclamation is aimed at helping us experience God's Word. It is allowing "The Word" to come alive for us and our world and our needs. It is allowing "The Word" to be so vivid that we will want to respond with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me!" We see that desire to be involved with "The Word" when children beg for the opportunity to be one of the characters in an enactment of one of the biblical stories. It is that desire I think all of us of faith have to be a part of God's story, of what God is doing on this earth.

Pastor Jim describes **JAM** as the Bible in 3-D. It is what I believe is critical in any effective study of scripture. It is putting yourself into the scripture. It is from within the story that we make the connection between God's Word and our life.

Occasionally, magic (illusion) will be used to help illustrate a scriptural truth. Upon occasion I have been asked why. The first answer is that this tool helps to communicate a sense of mystery and awe that is part of the faith. I believe we are too quick these days to try to explain away everything into concrete things we can get our hands on. Yet all the time the greatest element of life—love—always seems to be just beyond us, elusive and mysterious. How else do you explain God's love for us sinners, apart from awe, mystery and wonder? That desire to experience mystery is seen in the way that magic (illusion) so captures the attention and the imagination of not only kids but adults as well. I have been a member of the fellowship of Christian Magicians for over 35 years and have found it to be an effective tool in communicating the gospel!

Drama, object lessons, and melodrama are additional tools all with the same goal of communicating the gospel so that it comes alive in the young hearts.

### 4. **Worship is resPonse.**

Worship is saying yes to God. It is sharing in the work of God in the world. It is saying I want to be a part of whatever God is doing, His partner. Offering will not only be giving money, but more importantly our hearts and lives as we respond to His love for us.

Do not misunderstand the point here, however. It is not saying worship is more important than teaching in Sunday School. Rather it is saying that both Sunday school and worship are critical elements in spiritual formation that lead a child to faith and neither should be neglected.

Ultimately, worship cannot be put down in a set of principles or words, but must be experienced. For it is when we experience God with us, that our hearts come alive with joy and that is worship! Help your children, or grandchild to experience worship as we gather for **JAM** each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Worship makes a real difference in our lives each week for in it we strengthen our relationship with the Father, experience the Love of Jesus for us, and know that presence that gives us strength.

*Rev. John K. Wortinger*

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### **As we begin January 2012 through Epiphany, our focus in **JAM** will be on Jesus:**

Jan. 15	Jesus in the Carpenter Shop ( <i>Matthew 11:28-30</i> )
Jan. 22	Jesus Lost in Jerusalem ( <i>Luke 2:40-52</i> )
Jan. 29	John the Baptist and Jesus at the Jordan ( <i>Matthew 3</i> )
Feb. 5	Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness ( <i>Matthew 4</i> )
Feb 12	Jesus Calls Fishermen ( <i>Luke 5:1-11</i> )
Feb. 19	Jesus Calls Levi ( <i>Luke 5:27-32</i> )
Feb. 26	Jesus Heals a Paralytic ( <i>Luke 5:17-26</i> )

**Want to Volunteer?**

Contact Pastor John at  
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or 535-8555 ext. 1315

