



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY REPORT

## Lois Hales | Children's Ministry Director

As usual, our year starts off in June with Summer Bible Club, an amazing time of outreach. Last year, nearly 400 children attended, with more than 200 adults and teens serving. Not only was this a wonderful example of all ages serving together, but also many children made first-time decisions to follow Jesus. As the summer continued, we saw many parents step up and help in their children's classes. This was great for both the parents and the kids, modeling the value of serving.



When fall approached, all the children had Bible lessons that were drawn from Pilgrim's Progress to follow along with Pastor Jay's sermons. That proved to be very enjoyable for the children, and helpful for starting family discussions. After that was completed, the children started a new curriculum called D6, coming from Deuteronomy 6, a passage instructing parents to train their children in the ways of the Lord. With this new curriculum came better resources to help parents teach their children at home. We also piloted "Talk Times" -- short meetings at classes with children and parents, providing a time for parents to get to know the teachers and each other.

Our clubs for elementary children, GEMS (girls) and BLAST! (boys) proved to be a great time for fun, fellowship, and growing in an understanding of God's ways. The girls were especially good at inviting their friends, resulting in many visitors who typically don't attend any church. The children in the clubs, along with other Valley kids, did several service projects that impacted our community and the world. These included: packing "survival kits" for police from Avon and Torrington; creating shoeboxes of gifts for Operation Christmas Child; assembling food kits for the hungry (arranged through Urban Alliance and World Vision); and raising money for the Esther School in Zambia. Many children participated in the "Love CT" days, as well as the Summer Bible Club missions project.

Our Avon Campus Nursery saw seven new babies arrive this year, with more on the way. The Walker Nursery-Preschool classes were also introduced to D6 curriculum, helping them learn Bible stories in fun ways. At the Avon Campus, Puppets and Praise was added as part of a new rotation model in the Preschool classes. Many parents commented on how their children love this format. Some said their children were singing the songs at home or retelling the Bible stories. Additionally, children had opportunity for fun and hearing about Jesus in over 100 childcare events, including MOPS, Mom's Bible Study, Welcome Dinners, Tuesday Night Life, quarterly meetings, and many other corresponding adult activities!

A highlight of the year was seeing children come to know the Lord. Twenty children made first-time decisions! Several took a step further and attended the baptism class with their parents. This year, we rejoiced as six children took that step of faith and declared Jesus as their Lord! We also had 16 children presented to the Lord in Parent/Child Dedications, giving parents the opportunity to see the congregation promise to help them with their commitment.

Lastly, let's take time to celebrate the hundreds of volunteers who say "yes" to the Lord, and use their gifts and talents to love and teach the children. Without people having a vision for kids coming to know and follow Jesus, and then putting that vision into action, we wouldn't have all this to report. Thank God for each and every one of them, and to God be the glory for the great things He has done!