



One Million Invitations One at a Time: Encouraging Evangelism With Children & Their Families

One Million: a Huge Number

But the angel said to them, "... I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."... When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them." (Luke 2:10-11,17-18).

One million is a huge number and an incredible target! C20 has an aggressive goal that WELS individuals throughout our congregations would invite one million unchurched friends, family members, or acquaintances to join them in worship this Christmas. One million people is the equivalent of inviting the whole city of San Jose, CA or inviting all those who live in Milwaukee and Minneapolis, MN!

That seems like a lofty goal until we break it down by district, circuit, congregation, school, early childhood ministry, or individual church member. WELS includes about 350,000 individuals including men, women, and children. Even if we take out the very youngest children, if each person invited just four people to worship this Christmas, that goal is absolutely attainable! That's everyone inviting one family or two couples or four neighbors.

How can we encourage our students and their families to be like the shepherds of Bethlehem spreading the Christmas message to all those they know and care about? You may be thinking that you tell your members and even students

all the time to share Jesus with those they know that don't have a church home, and that's great. Keep doing that. But what if we all could be a little more intentional and focus on specific ways to equip and encourage them to invite someone to church this year? Christmas is the most likely time that someone would be open to an invitation to attend a worship service. They only need to be asked. So, what are some ways that we can equip and encourage our school/early childhood students and their families to reach out with an invitation?

We asked several WELS pastors and teachers to share ways that they encourage and equip their students and school families to be evangelists with those around them. The following are some of the strategies and suggestions we received.

Observations in General

- Almost without exception, respondents included the reminder that it all starts with sharing the Word faithfully with our students and their families. Faith that is strong and growing is motivated by the Holy Spirit to share the precious gospel with others. This is part of our role as pastors and teachers. What a blessing it is when each of us is eager and excited to share the amazing news of Christ with everyone we know!
- Pray boldly as a staff, a family, a classroom, asking God to open doors for an invitation.
- So many congregations, schools, and early childhood ministries have family events that are open to the community such as a Fall Festival, *Christmas for Kids*, and many others. This is a great time to extend personal and written invitations to those who attend the events. Do you have a means

to collect contact information at these events so that you can send them a thank you for attending the event and also invite them to worship, especially Christmas?

- Many, if not most, of our schools and early childhood ministries have families who enroll their children but have no church home. How can you make sure they know you care about them beyond the classroom? How can you include them in congregational activities? What opportunities are there to extend an invitation to them and let them know they are welcome to worship on Christmas and at any worship service? **The C20 program includes excellent, affordable print outreach materials, such as postcards or business-card invitations. There is also a MS Word template that allows you to print up your own tent-fold card. Might you send these home with your kids? Better, hand them to parents personally when they pick their child up after school.**
- Our schools and early childhood ministries love to have their students sing in a worship service. How is this communicated with school/ECM families who are not members of the congregation? Is this a note in a newsletter? An email reminder? A personal invitation? Do we communicate this with enthusiasm and joy as an opportunity rather than a commitment? How can we help the non-member family feel comfortable coming into our worship to hear their child and others share Jesus in song? How can we and our members best plan “for company” in this service to be sure they feel welcome? Just as important, when these family members do come to see their child sing, what is the plan to follow up on them? Is the pastor or a trained lay member ready to stop by within three days of that worship visitor attending church? That is vital in encouraging that individual to make a repeat visit.
- Written invitations in newsletters and other publications are good. But wouldn't you be more likely to attend something if someone cared enough to ask you in person? Identify the school families who would be wonderful at one-to-one invitations. Ask them to work together to identify ways to extend those invitations and to



make sure that all school or early childhood families receive that personal invitation.

In an elementary or high school

- Sharing the Good News of Jesus is a natural part of the lessons in *Christ Light* or catechism, but it can easily become something that we just talk about. We need to also discuss the reasons why we witness. We need to share how to witness. Intentionally plan for these discussions and listen to student suggestions on ways for them to reach out to friends and those they know. Explain to them that inviting unchurched friends and relatives to church is a really good way to “ease into” witnessing. It is not scary.
 - **Provide the opportunity for students to brainstorm a list of people they know and would like to invite. Provide them with the steps to “work” that list. You will find a “MY PERSONAL MISSION FIELD” document, aimed at helping kids do just this, [here](#).**
- Can you help your students find a partner to encourage them to reach out with their invitations? They could pray for each other and spur one another on to work their list.
- Provide a lesson on letter writing for primary through high school students where they draft a letter that could be sent to those they would like to invite. Encourage them to make it personal. Discuss ways for them to follow-up once the letter is mailed.
- Could students design a special postcard to invite others to their church for Christmas? Once printed, each student can take several to hand out individually or mail.
- **Our young people are savvy with social media. Encourage them to use that as an additional way to extend their invitations. An invitation video to Christmas Eve is available in the Evangelism C20 resource packet [here](#).**
- Practice role-playing. Students may be hesitant because they are uncomfortable or unsure of what to say. Create authentic scenarios and help them to consider and practice ways to respond and what to say. Explain that it is ok if they simply invite friends to Christmas Eve. That

might be *all* they say for now. When that friend attends, it sets the stage for future spiritual conversation. Help the students think through how those might go.

- Schedule a Christmas canvassing event with students and their families. This event can have everyone meet at a given time and hand out invitations in a pre-determined area around the church. Another possibility is setting a given time and students go out with their families in their own neighborhood or to those they would like to invite. You can find more information on canvassing [here](#).

In an early childhood/primary setting

“Before they are evangelists, they have to be equipped with the message. Our overall goal is to equip 32 evangelists this year by having them learn Christ-centered songs so they sing that at home.” When Pastor Jay Bickelhaupt (serving at Apostles Lutheran in Billings, MT) wrote those words, the “32 evangelists” he was referring to are the children in Apostle’s early childhood program.

- Young children are eager to share all they are learning about Jesus. Can you equip them to serve their Savior in this way? Who wouldn’t love a personal invitation from a young child? Children can design or color an invitation and then take it home to mail or hand out (with the help of their parents) to unchurched friends, family members, or neighbors.
- Consider extended activity projects with Bible story lessons that help the children to tell the Bible story outside the classroom or that can be used to invite others to Christmas worship.

School families

- **One congregation is hanging a string of 1,000 lights in their narthex or lobby. To begin with, all the lights are dark-colored bulbs. Members, including children, are asked to replace a dark bulb with a light one every time they invite someone to church for Christmas. Is there an adaptation of this that would work for your congregation, school, early childhood ministry, or Sunday school?**
- In principal conferences or pastor circuit meetings, discuss and learn from each other how they use social media to reach out to the community. Consider this beyond marketing for the school or early childhood ministry. How can social media be used by individuals to invite others, including those they know, to worship with them this Christmas?

These are just a sampling of possible ideas. Some may work for your setting and some may not. What ideas can you use or adapt that will get your students and school families excited to invite others to worship this Christmas?

Who will you invite? Who will you encourage to invite others? What blessings can the Holy Spirit shower on those invited?

One person at a time

One invitation at a time. One person at a time. One Savior who came for all. We get to share this amazing news of God’s grace for all!

May God bless you, the students, and the families of your school or early childhood ministry as you reach out and say, “Come and hear! A Savior has been born for you! Christ the Lord!”