





# PASTOR INVITATION LETTER

(This letter is on the Director's Resource USB)

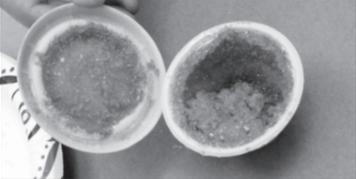
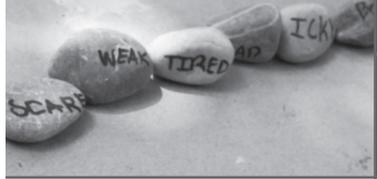
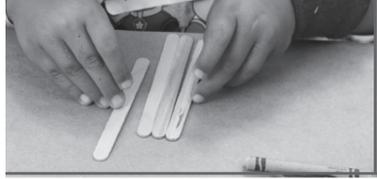
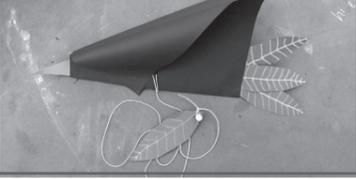
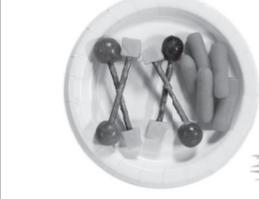
Dear Pastor,

We recognize how important it is for our kids to recognize the needs of others. To this end we are including the ADRA mission project in this year's VBS program. This project raises money to build an ADRA Water Kiosk.

Please join us in our ADRA mission project by encouraging the congregation to participate. Your support and prayers can make a big difference in the lives of families around the world.

Your VBS director has instructions for collecting the funds and an offering code that has been designated for this project. Thank you for investing in the growth and training of our children and making a difference in the lives of kids and their families in \_\_\_\_\_.

Sherri Uhrig, Director  
Children's Ministries

EXCAVATION POST <i>Prayer Station</i>	ARTIFACT CRAFTS <i>Craft Station</i>	TESTING PIT <i>Game Station</i>	PICNIC SNACKS <i>Snack Station</i>
Play-Doh Sculpting & Field Journal 	Jasper Gemstone 	Get-to-Know-You Pre-Game Rock Wall Cracks	Gemstone Parfait 
Carrying Burdens & Field Journal 	Jasper Canyon Fossils 	Get-to-Know-You Pre-Game Jasper Canyon Obstacle Course	Fossil Crackers 
Mosaic Hearts & Field Journal 	Jasper Mosaic 	Get-to-Know-You Pre-Game Jasper Canyon Mosaic Tag	Mosaic Trail Mix 
Prayer Links & Field Journal 	Jasper Family Petroglyphs 	Get-to-Know-You Pre-Game Jasper Canyon Family Four Square	Petroglyph Sweets 
Popsicle Stick House & Field Journal 	Jasper Canyon Eagle 	Get-to-Know-You Pre-Game Eagles Nest Relay Race	Rockhound Tools 

## WELCOME

Welcome to Jasper Canyon VBS! Your kids are going to love learning that they are treasured by God. This VBS is set in a wild canyon where they are rockhounds looking for treasure. From the music to the stories, crafts, and snacks, they will be reminded of the daily theme through experiences that connect them with the Bible character of the day. We have given you a few ideas on decorating and costumes, but feel free to use your imagination and be as creative as you want! You're going to have a great time with your kids in Jasper Canyon.

This Director's Guide is designed to help you plan a fun and successful program for any size church. We've included a basic overview of the program along with detailed station information. You will also find ideas for recruiting and training volunteers, publicizing your program, and staying connected with the families in your community after VBS is over.

We want to provide support and encouragement as you embark on this journey to bring kids into a relationship with Jesus and help them understand how His love can impact their lives. It is our prayer that God's peace and grace will fill your heart and encourage you. May God bless and guide you and your team as you work together to share Jesus with these kids and their families.



### Overview of the Theme

Our program takes place deep in Jasper Canyon where kids are rockhounds looking for treasure. In the opening program, kids are welcomed to Jasper Canyon and Rocky the Rockhound introduces them to the Daily Find and Bedrock Verse. In the skit, Dr. Soyle and his rockhound friends explore the treasures of Jasper Canyon and remind the kids how they are each treasured by God.

### Daily Find and Bedrock Verse

The Daily Find summarizes what the kids learn each day. The kids will learn the Daily Find and motions in the opening program and they will be reinforced in each station.

- Day 1 – Jesus made me special! I dig it!
- Day 2 – Jesus made me strong! I dig it!
- Day 3 – Jesus made me smart! I dig it!
- Day 4 – Jesus made me in His family! I dig it!
- Day 5 – Jesus Made me to live with Him forever! I dig it!

### Bedrock Verse

This year we have a great Bedrock Verse that is broken down into segments that kids learn each day. We will start with the first part, then build on it each day so that by the end of the week, the kids know the entire verse by memory. We have added a set of Bedrock Verse posters that volunteers can use each day to help teach the Bedrock Verse to the other kids. Motions are included to further imprint the verse on the hearts of the kids.



## PARENT INVITATION LETTER

(This letter is on the Director's Resource USB)

Dear Parents:

We want to invite your kids to join us for an exciting program. Please mark these dates on your calendar so your children won't miss our Jasper Canyon VBS.

Where:

Address:

Date:

Time:

Contact Information:

Your kids will visit Jasper Canyon, where they will learn that they are treasured by God.

This will be an exciting week of singing, playing games, and learning about how we are all treasured by God, who has created us with unique gifts and talents. Be sure you register to attend, and encourage your children to invite and bring a friend!

Also, while you're marking your calendar, plan to attend our closing program on \_\_\_\_\_. Your children will have a part in the program, so we know you will want to be there.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

VBS Director

- Be sure that the church board has approved your budget.
- Be sure you have ordered all your supplies.

#### 4 Weeks Before

- Hold a final meeting with all staff and volunteers to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of their responsibilities and a chance to address any questions or concerns they may have. Also, make sure to inform them about backup and emergency plans.
- Touch base with each Station Leader and review the supplies they will need. Be sure they have all the supplies and volunteers they need for their station.
- Get your congregation excited about the ADRA mission project.
- Continue marketing in your church and the community. One good way to do this is to find the VBS promotional video available on your Director's Resource USB and show it during church service.
- Continue to encourage preregistration.

#### 2 Weeks Before

- Check your registration count.
- Get reports from Station Leaders to be sure everything is on schedule.
- Ask the pastor to plan a dedication church service for all staff members.
- Teach the VBS songs to your staff, including the Crew Leaders.
- Get a report from the decorating committee.
- Inventory supplies to be sure everyone has what they need.

#### 1 Week Before

- Complete all decorations.
- Check with Station Leaders to make sure they have all their supplies.
- Make a list of any last-minute supplies needed.
- Decide when and where all Station Leaders and Crew Leaders will meet each day.

#### 1 Day Before

- Finish up any last-minute decorating or organizing of supplies for each station.

- Have a prayer walkthrough. Invite your team to join you in each room the children will be in. Pray for the kids who will be attending.

#### Opening Day

- Arrive early and make sure you staff arrives early as well to address any last-minute details.
- Be ready at the door with a smile and welcoming words for each child that enters. Direct them to the registration table. Ask their name and introduce them to those who are registering. You will need several helpers to assist you.

#### 1 Week After Program Ends

- Inventory supplies, including craft items, printed materials, and nonperishable snack supplies.
- Conduct a meeting with your team to debrief about the week.
- Complete all records.
- Complete the North American Division report at ChildMin.org and report to your conference office.
- Arrange with the pastor for follow-up with the families.
- Write thank you notes or create appreciation certificates for your staff. Consider hosting a staff ice cream party to thank everyone for their help.



#### Mission Project

This year we are going to collect money to build an ADRA Water Kiosk. The ADRA Water Kiosk is a comprehensive system of pumping, filtration, treatment, distribution, and vending that provides clean, consistent water. For communities whose main source of water has long been a shallow, seasonal, and heavily polluted river, water kiosks are lifesaving.

Each ADRA Water Kiosk is constructed from repurposed shipping containers. Through the use of WiFi hot spots, television monitors, and relevant messaging, ADRA Water Kiosks are equipped to provide water as well as information for sanitary and healthy living in rural, urban, and peri-urban communities.

Every day during our closing session the kids will watch a video telling them more about this project and inviting them to bring their money to help fund it.

On day 1 each child will receive an ADRA collection box. They will bring this box back to VBS each day and deposit their money in the Treasure Box at the registration table.



#### Staff Apparel

Encourage all your staff members to adopt an outfit for your VBS program. You can purchase Jasper Canyon staff t-shirts or have them dress in hiking / outdoor gear. Jasper Canyon t-shirts are available from AdventSource at [AdventSource.org](http://AdventSource.org) or 402.486.8800.

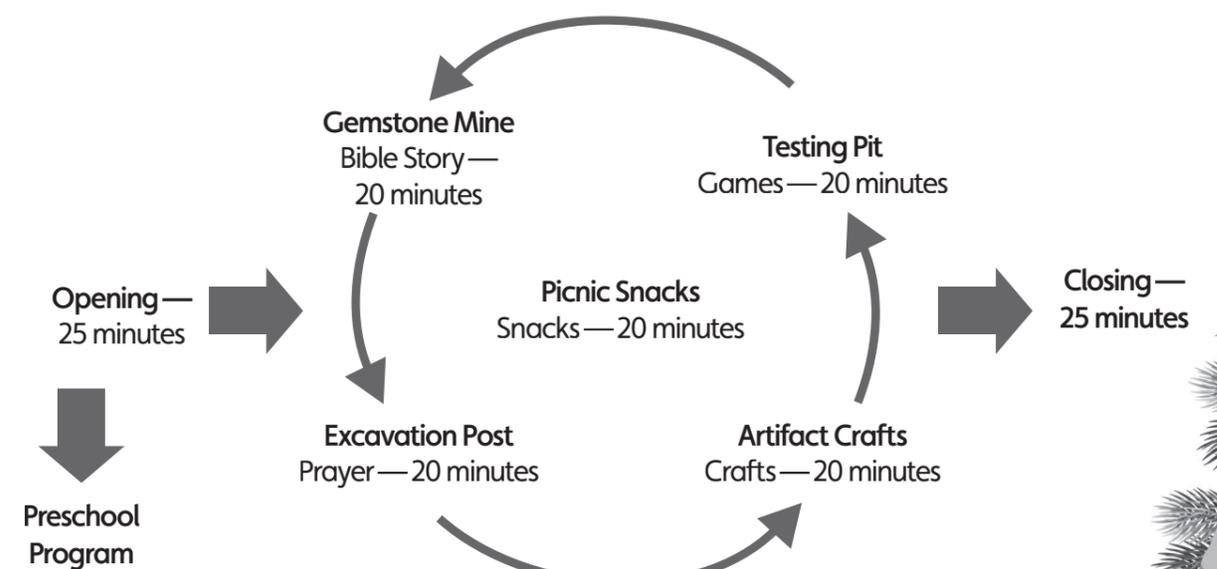


#### Station

Here are the stations for our VBS this year. You will see that each one is based in and around Jasper Canyon.

- Dig Site (Opening and Closing Program)
- Gemstone Mine (Bible Story Station)
- Excavation Post (Prayer Station)
- Artifact Crafts (Craft Station)
- Picnic Snacks (Snack Station)
- Testing Pit (Game Station)

#### Station Rotations and Suggested Schedule



## DIG SITE – OPENING & CLOSING PROGRAM

Each day starts with the kids gathering at the Dig Site, which is the opening station. The leader welcomes them to Jasper Canyon and introduces the Rock Stars, who will lead the songs during the opening and closing programs. Rocky the Rockhound introduces the Daily Find, and the kids learn a section of the Bedrock Verse. In the daily skit Dr. Soyle and his rockhound friends look for treasure and reinforce the Daily Find. This skit can be done in person or watched on a video.

### Crews

As kids arrive, they are put into Crews. Crew Leaders will greet each child as they come in and will guide their Crew through the stations and the debrief time during the closing program. Each Crew name is a different rock or mineral that rockhounds may find.

- Crystals
- Geodes
- Agates
- Opals
- Garnets

During the closing program we have included Crew Time, where the Crew Leader helps the kids to internalize the Daily Find.

### Music

Jasper Canyon has some great new songs and arrangements of songs that your kids may already know. Your kids are going to love these songs. We have a mix of some that will get the kids excited and some that are more reflective and encourage commitment. Here are the titles:

- Treasured by God (Theme Song)
- Good Gifts
- Nothing Can Separate Me from You
- Special
- Coming Back Again
- Be Strong/All Hail the Power

In the opening and closing program we have listed the songs we suggest you sing each day. But you can mix, match, and add songs however works for your VBS.

A music CD and DVD have been provided with the kit. You can choose to show the video, play the audio with lyrics, or just use the audio. In addition, the USB includes sheet music with guitar chords for each song.

### Bible Story

Each day the kids will be introduced to a Bible story that will connect the kids with the Daily Find.

- Day 1 – Noah and the Flood
- Day 2 – Abigail

- Day 3 – Solomon
- Day 4 – Ruth
- Day 5 – Elijah

### Skit

During the opening and closing programs, the kids will watch a skit where Dr. Soyle and rockhounds Courtney and Joshua learn the daily lesson as they search for treasure. These skits are short, funny, to the point, and reinforce the message for each day. Show the skit DVD in your starter kit or use the script for a live performance.

Following the opening program, the children are sent out to explore Jasper Canyon by visiting each of the stations.

### Closing Program

At the closing program the Rock Stars lead some songs, the kids report what they learned at the stations, add a note to the Gemstone Wall, and watch the closing skit. The closing session also features a mission project video where kids are introduced to the ADRA project for this year.

### Decision Cards

There have been many testimonies of people giving their hearts to Jesus because of Vacation Bible School. Each day of Jasper Canyon presents an opportunity for children to respond to the gospel message. Jesus proclaimed the importance of children in Matthew 18:6, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” Based on statistical data, a child is more ready to respond to the gospel message than many adults!

The Jasper Canyon USB includes Decision Cards that can be inserted in the closing program for days 4 and day 5. The closing program script includes instructions for Crew Leaders to invite anyone who feels the Holy Spirit speaking to their hearts to give their hearts to Jesus. The cards will be gathered and given to the pastor for follow-up with children’s Bible studies.

May the Lord bless you as you provide opportunities for children to say YES to Jesus!



## COUNTDOWN TO SUCCESS

### 3–6 Months Before Your VBS

- Pray for your VBS program. Ask God to help you to plan an outreach event that will honor and glorify Him. Ask God to work in the hearts of your congregation, volunteers, and leaders.
- Select the format for your VBS.
  - Will you have a morning, afternoon, or evening VBS?
  - Will you have a weekend, weeklong, or even a two-week program?
  - Will you include a program for parents/families?
  - Will your program take place at your church or at another location?
- Select and reserve facilities for each of your stations that best suit the activities that will take place there.
- Begin selection of your team. Go over the job descriptions on pages 16-18 and determine your needs.
- Ask your congregation to start praying for this year’s VBS.
- Plan your VBS budget.
- Think about fundraising ideas.
  - Speak with your pastor about assigning evangelism funds to the VBS program.
  - Find out if your local conference has evangelism funds that your church can request for VBS.
  - Collect an offering to help with expenses.
  - Invite your congregation to help sponsor expenses for a specific station.
  - Ask your congregation to donate decoration items so you don’t have to purchase them.

### 2–3 Months Before

- Recruit Station Leaders.
  - Schedule a time to meet with all Station Leaders. Give them training and distribute the station manuals and materials. It is important to hold these meetings to ensure that everyone is well equipped and informed prior to the start of VBS.
- Start the marketing and publicity for your VBS.



- Announce the dates for VBS in your church bulletin.
- Consider creating a VBS page on your church’s website.
- Post flyers and posters in strategic locations around your church (check AdventistVBS.org for clip art and promotional materials).
- Ask permission to post flyers and posters in your local church school, public schools, and businesses as well.
- Encourage parents to preregister their kids. Early registration helps you calculate food and supplies.
- Start advertising your VBS program on social media.
- Order whatever supplies and you need for VBS. You can order some of your supplies from AdventSource at AdventSource.org or 402.486.8800. For craft materials, visit craft stores or buy from vendors online.

### 8 Weeks Before

- Recruit and train additional Crew Leaders and volunteers if needed.
- Continue your marketing and publicity efforts.
- Continue gathering supplies and decoration materials.
- Meet with your decorating team to create a detailed decorating master plan.
- Work on your VBS rotation schedule.



and family who comes even after VBS is over. What a great way for church members to get involved!

### Resource Manager

This is someone who takes care of getting all the resources needed for VBS. They are responsible for borrowing whatever is needed and seeing that it is returned after VBS. In most cases the individual Station Leaders will prefer to do this for themselves. However, having a resource manager is helpful as many of the supplies can be purchased in larger quantities and distributed to the different stations as needed. A resource manager can play a key role in helping the various Station Leaders as they plan for their needs.

### Decorating Team

Another way to help your Station Leaders is to have a decorating team. It is such a blessing to have one special group in charge of decorations! If this isn't possible, your Station Leaders can decorate the rooms they are in charge of themselves. If you are able to have a decorating team, their job will be to provide the necessary decorations for each station, including the opening and closing station and the registration table. It is their job to change around the props as needed each day or during the program. They are also responsible for all props after VBS is over, including returning any items that were borrowed.

### Media Specialist

The media specialist is the person who runs your audio, video, PowerPoint, and lighting for the week. In addition, they need to make a list of any media needed during VBS, the name of the Station Leader needing it, and where it is needed. It is the media specialist's job to have the equipment in place and ready to use as needed. Once VBS is over, he or she makes sure that all equipment is returned to its proper place.

### Photographer

The photographer takes pictures throughout the week and prepares them to show on a projector at the closing program. They are responsible for creating the Photo Time slide presentation, where kids get to see themselves in various rotations. We recommend showing a final presentation on Sabbath to show the congregation what happened during the week. Ask your pastor for a time during the worship service to highlight VBS. Be sure you have

permission to use photos of the kids—this must be included registration.

### Registrar and Registration Helpers

The registrar is the first person your attendees will see. We highly recommend that you choose adult volunteers. This position requires an outgoing and organized personality. No matter the attendance, this is at least a two-person job. Registrars ask the parents to fill out an information card, write nametags for the children, and answer any questions parents may have.

The registrar should organize the cards and enter the information into a database where it will be accessible to division leaders or people sending invitations for VBS next year.

### Nurse and First Aid Provider

Every VBS needs someone skilled and ready to administer first aid. They should keep in mind, however, that we are not permitted to provide any medications to children. He or she should follow the list below to make sure your VBS is the safest possible:

- Keep a first aid box well supplied with Band-Aids.
- Have a record of any children who have special medical problems or diets.
- Keep the snack station directors informed of any food allergies.
- Be a comfort to any child who begins to feel ill.
- Be prepared to make a call to a child's parent/caregiver, if it is needed.
- If there is a severe illness or injury, call 911 and the child's caregiver.

### Follow-up Leader

This person should be included in everything your team plans for VBS. He or she needs to form their own team of workers to plan and execute events and activities during the year between VBS programs. Refer this person to the *Quick Start Guide for Child Evangelism*, available from AdventSource at [AdventSource.org](http://AdventSource.org) or 402.486.8800. The follow-up leader can work with the children's ministries coordinator or Sabbath School leaders to invite the children to church each Sabbath for a "mini VBS" program. This is an excellent follow-up program for your church. Take advantage of it!

## JASPER CANYON STATIONS

### Gemstone Mine – Bible Story Station

At this station, the kids learn about the Bible story for the day. The Station Leader will set the tone for the station with a short interactive activity that connects to the Daily Find. After the activity, the storyteller will narrate the story of that day's Bible character or show the puppet video. The starter kit includes two leader's guides for this station – one incorporating the puppet videos and one without the puppet videos.

#### Day 1

**Activity:** Look Through Funny Glasses with Different Colors or Shapes

**Daily Find:** "Jesus made me special! I dig it!"

**Bible Story:** The Flood

#### Day 2

**Activity:** Crack a Rock

**Daily Find:** "Jesus made me strong! I dig it!"

**Bible Story:** Abigail

#### Day 3

**Activity:** Compass Relay

**Daily Find:** "Jesus made me smart! I dig it!"

**Bible Story:** Solomon

#### Day 4

**Activity:** Parachute Game – Don't Drop the Ball

**Daily Find:** "Jesus made me in His family! I dig it!"

**Bible Story:** Ruth

#### Day 5

**Activity:** Finding Crystals

**Daily Find:** "Jesus made me to live with Him forever! I dig it!"

**Bible Story:** Elisha



### Excavation Post – Prayer Station

At this station, the kids will learn about prayer, how to pray, and what to pray for based on the Daily Find. They will also learn that just like you have to dig deep for treasure, prayer is digging deep and it helps us to find the treasure that Jesus has for us as we journey through life. The concepts will be taught and reinforced in three ways: 1) kids dig and find artifacts that illustrate what they pray about that day, 2) Group Prayer, a call and response interaction where everyone prays together, and 3) Personal Prayer Time, a moment where the children personally reflect on what the Daily Find means to them. The artifacts are:

- Day 1 – Pottery shards
- Day 2 – Smooth river stones
- Day 3 – Wooden puzzle pieces
- Day 4 – Barrel of Monkey toys
- Day 5 – Lincoln Logs or popsicle sticks

### Artifact Crafts – Craft Station

In this program, we have provided two craft options that reinforce the Daily Find. The first option is a craft that can be made using materials from local craft stores, and the second option is a craft kit that can be purchased online from Oriental Trading. The local craft options are:

- Jasper Gemstone
- Jasper Canyon Fossils
- Jasper Mosaic
- Jasper Family Petroglyphs
- Jasper Canyon Eagle



## Picnic Snacks – Snack Station

Here in Jasper Canyon, we believe in the power of food. Each snack has been purposely and intentionally chosen...and taste-tested! During this program, the kids will enjoy:

- Gemstone Parfaits
- Fossil Crackers
- Mosaic Trail Mix
- Petroglyph Sweets
- Rockhound Tools



## Testing Pit – Games Station

At the Testing Pit kids will have a wonderful time playing interactive games that emphasize the Daily Find. We start with a Get-to-Know-You Game and then get into the test, an engaging and fun time!

The games are:

- Day 1 – Rock Wall Cracks
- Day 2 – Jasper Canyon Obstacle Course
- Day 3 – Jasper Canyon Mosaic Tag
- Day 4 – Jasper Canyon Family Four Square
- Day 5 – Eagles Nest Relay Race



## Decorating Your Space

Decorating is important because a good atmosphere helps add to the excitement of VBS and allows the kids to experience the setting. You will find suggestions for decorating each station in the specific station guides. Ask your decorating team to be creative and to look for ways to decorate the hallways and the front of the church that correspond with your stage décor. Following the Jasper Canyon theme, you could convert hallways into canyon walls where kids go from one station to the next. You can use pop-up tents to form the structure and then add cardboard painted to create caves, picnic spots, and other stations.

We suggest searching the Internet for various ideas and letting your creativity do the rest. All you have to remember is that you are creating a space where kids will be experiencing a canyon deep in the heart of a mountain range.



hand in hand with the director to decide which responsibilities the he or she will take and which the director will take. The rest of the staff is your team. Treat them as team members who have a vested interest in what happens during your VBS and its outcome.

## Crew Leaders (Small Group Leaders)

Each child will be assigned a Crew, or group, during registration. Every Crew needs a Crew Leader, and this is a great job for the teens in your church! Younger kids really respond to them. If you do choose teens or tweens to be Crew Leaders, make sure to spend time with them explaining what their responsibilities are before VBS starts. Check the Director's Resource USB drive for the Crew Leader's guide and daily program helps that will assist them in working with the kids.

The Crew Leader should be given a bag or drawstring backpack each day with the items they will need for each member of their Crew. You can use a simple paper bag with a handle from the dollar store or use the Jasper Canyon drawstring bags available from *AdventSource* at *AdventSource.org* and 402.486.8800.

## Opening & Closing Station Leader

The Dig Site is the first station the kids will attend each day. During this time the leader will introduce the Rock Stars, who will teach the songs, Rock the Rockhound who introduces the Daily Find, and Dr. Soyle and his rockhound friends who do the skit. The Dig Site leader will also lead out in helping the kids learn the Bedrock Verse.

## Song Leaders – Rock Stars

The Rock Stars are responsible for leading out in the music if you choose to do it live. Otherwise, you can use the provided music DVD. We recommend choosing song leaders from those among your staff who you know are good singers. They should be enthusiastic and make sure to learn the songs and the motions that go with them ahead of time. Involving teens as song leaders is a great idea.

## Station Leaders

Station Leaders play a key role in the success of your VBS. Choose Station Leaders who are organized, motivated, and not afraid to take on responsibilities. Their responsibilities include: finding additional volunteers needed to run the station, buying the necessary supplies, staying within their

budget, and decorating their station. Make sure you give your Station Leaders their station manual as early as possible to allow them ample time to prepare. Each station manual gives a daily overview of its activities so the leaders can understand how their stations fit with the Daily Find. Meet with your Station Leaders often to answer any questions they may have, help solve any challenges they may be facing, and ensure that they are running each station in the way that works best for your church. Remember that stations are designed to be experiential and not classroom-based where kids simply sit and listen. Station Leaders play a key role in the success of VBS, so be sure to affirm them for the wonderful work they are doing!

## Treasurer/Business Manager

If you are fortunate enough to have a business manager, they will be responsible for collecting receipts and handling reimbursements for the team. He or she should also keep the director aware of the state of the budget. If you have a business manager, they can be in charge of any fundraising needed. If you don't have one, this can be a position you choose to delegate to your assistant director. Otherwise, this role falls on you.

## Publicity Director

This person promotes VBS through signage outside your church, announcements during church services, posters in the church and community, announcements on the church website, reminders in the church bulletin and email newsletters, social media, or announcements in the local newspaper, placards in stores, invitations passed out in the neighborhood, and postcards to former attendees. They should always include the date, time, and location of the program as well as the name of your church. A good way to get the whole church involved is by asking members to invite kids and families from their neighborhood. He or she can also remind the members that this is not simply a children's ministry event, but evangelism to the whole community.

## Prayer Leader

The prayer leader may never attend your program at all, but their job is of the utmost importance. The prayer leader organizes the church into an active prayer circle, specifically praying for both the leaders and the children who will attend. This is a wonderful responsibility for a shut-in person and will give them a link to your church family. They can continue to pray for each kid

## RECRUITING AND STAFF TRAINING

Here are some great ways to recruit volunteers:

- Sending people personal invitations. This is the best recruiting method. It's an opportunity to share your vision about how God can use volunteers and this program to reach the children.
- Praying for God to send you the individuals you need.
- Placing announcements in the bulletins and sharing your vision from the pulpit.
- Inviting people over the phone and/or email.
- Encouraging your volunteers to recruit more volunteers.
- Inviting the teens in your church to participate as Crew Leaders. Some teenagers need community service hours for school. VBS qualifies as a community service event.
- Keeping in mind that retired people may be more available for volunteering than those who work.



Once you have your volunteers, here are some ways to equip them:

- Providing ministry descriptions that describe their responsibilities.
- Making sure they have the essential equipment they need to do their job.
- Providing the appropriate resources, including human, financial, and paper.
- Offering training through mentoring and planning sessions.
- Supporting them and affirming them profusely.

(Adapted from *Pastor's and Elder's Handbook for Children's Ministries* [Children's Ministries Department and Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists], pp. 24-28.)

### Job Descriptions

#### **Director and Assistant Director**

The director plans for the overall needs of the staff and organizes the time (such as scheduling) and the space (such as assigning rooms) details of the program. The director is a behind-the-scenes organizer. Some of the responsibilities of the director include:

- Leading out in staff meetings.
- Recruiting and training staff.
- Attending VBS training sessions provided by your local conference or online.
- Planning for registration and record-keeping.
- Planning the schedule.
- Planning the budget with the treasurer/business manager.
- Conducting daily devotions for the team.
- Observing the stations and providing for any unexpected or emergency needs.
- Working with the children's ministries coordinator on follow-up.

Remember to delegate! Don't try to run the show all by yourself. If you see volunteers standing around, double check that you aren't doing something they could do. If you are, pass the torch to them so you can tend to other matters.

The director should be free of any individual station responsibilities. The assistant director works

## CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

This portion of the Vacation Bible School Director's Guide will provide you with ideas on how to create a program that welcomes children with varied needs and abilities. The following key points can help you and your team meet the needs of those with special needs while creating a safe and successful VBS program for all kids.

Jasper Canyon VBS is a place where kids will learn that we are all God's treasures. We want all children to have the opportunity to discover this treasure, regardless of their abilities or their challenges. Kids with disabilities may struggle to see how they can be treasured, as they often struggle to see how they fit in with other kids. During Jasper Canyon, each child can discover how God created them with their own unique gifts, talents, and abilities to make a big difference. While these abilities may come packaged differently for some kids, they each have unique gifts from God. By creating an inclusive VBS program, every child can discover how much God treasures them.

As you begin the planning process for an inclusive VBS program, ask God to help you see all of His kids through His eyes. Remember that kids with special needs are more alike than different from all children. Helping a child with special needs discover that God has a plan and a purpose for them within His family can open their hearts to the unconditional love of God. When they discover their place in God's family, they will discover a place of belonging and connection that they may have never experienced before. Creating a program that is inclusive to everyone can change not only the life of the child with special needs, but the lives of all the kids involved and help them to discover the amazing individuality that exists within the family of God.

As you meet with your VBS team and begin the planning process, be prayerful and proactive as you discuss and plan how Jasper Canyon can be accessible to all kids. Take some time to develop a plan to anticipate meeting the needs of a child with a disability. Whether or not you know of specific kids with special needs within your community, they are there. By being prepared and openly receptive to all kids, you will be creating a place for all to experience what it means to be a part of God's family.

Here are some points to consider as you welcome kids of all abilities to participate in Jasper Canyon:

1. As you meet with your team and design your program, take time to consider the activities through the perspective of a child with a disability in order to anticipate where and what adaptations might need to be made. Analyze the environment of your VBS program looking for obstacles that might impede the participation of a child with a physical disability. Be sure to seek the input from the parents/caregivers as well as the kids themselves.
2. Get to know each child's abilities. Find ways to build on their strengths while coming alongside them in their challenges. To help you get to know as much as possible about a child with special needs, it is vital to include the child and the parent/caregiver in that process. Parents and caregivers are excellent resources for giving input on what will make VBS a positive experience. Be sure to review the special needs portion filled out by the parent/caregiver on the registration form and ask questions when further information is needed.
3. A child may benefit from a volunteer who is willing to be their buddy during VBS. This buddy will be able to provide additional support for a child. This does not require a highly trained individual, but does require someone who has a passion for getting to know children's unique God-given gifts and abilities, is patient, and is willing to assist in the areas where a child may have particular struggles.
4. Some kids may have difficulty communicating but can understand everything you say. Be sure to talk to the child and not over them. Likewise, a child may have good verbal skills but require more time or visual aids to process what someone says to them.
5. Behavior is a form of communication. Look for an underlying cause and the message the child is trying to communicate. Redirect behavior in a positive way rather than reacting with a negative response.
6. Use visual aids such as pictures or icons to communicate directions, schedules, expectations, or concepts to a child who has a communication disability or language processing delay.

7. State your expectations clearly and in positive terms, making sure to tell the child what to do rather than not to do. Verbal directions should be clear and concise.
8. Alert the child well before transitioning to a new activity or station to reduce the anxiety associated with unexpected changes. Giving them a concrete end to an activity by saying, "One more time," or "When the big hand on the clock is at..." can also be helpful. Using a visual schedule may assist in transitions as well.
9. Support and encourage the child to participate in each activity, including those that are new or unfamiliar, while being careful not to push them to the point of frustration. Give them time to attempt the activity before offering your help. If you see a child is struggling with a task, always ask if he or she wants help before stepping in to assist.
10. Pay attention to nonverbal language that may indicate the child needs a sensory break. Sometimes a child may verbally communicate this, but often they won't. A child who demonstrates decreased self-control, increased difficulty following directions, escalating frustration, shutting things out by placing hands over their eyes or ears, or moving away from others may be experiencing an overwhelmed sensory system. You can find a solution by simply creating more space around the child or by giving them a specific task. Giving them time in a quieter area with a "sensory break box" or taking them on a walk can also help. This is where a buddy can be particularly useful.
11. Be aware that some kids may require more time to complete an activity or to transition to the next activity.



This may be obvious if a child has a physical disability, but it may also be true for kids with other disabilities, such as ADHD, autism, or cognitive delays. Plan how to accommodate for this ahead of time to minimize the amount of time a child may feel left behind or left out.

12. When communicating with parents and caregivers, focus on the positives. Discuss areas of need from a perspective of how to help a child be successful, rather than focusing on the difficulties they are having or seem to cause. Every parent wants to hear how well their kids are doing. Provide them with specific, positive details about the child's time at VBS. Your words may provide much needed encouragement to a family that is raising a unique, and sometimes challenging, child. It can make all the difference in a difficult situation to know that someone besides themselves recognizes the value of their child within the family of God.

While this list will help you to be better able to create an inclusive VBS program for all children, it is not an exhaustive list. You can find additional information about specific diagnoses as well as ideas for specific accommodations or adaptations. You can also find information about creating a sensory break box online and from sites such as Pinterest.

### Information Regarding Specific Disabilities

While the range of difficulties varies along a huge spectrum in kids with special needs, so does the range of incredible gifts and abilities. It is vital to build on these strengths while also recognizing a child's areas of difficulty to anticipate stressful situations that may require additional support or specific adaptations/accommodations in order for them to successfully participate in VBS. Being proactive rather than reactive will create a more positive overall experience. Below are details on specific areas of disability. This information can be helpful during the preparation phase of VBS. Remember that all kids are uniquely designed and that you should avoid stereotypes and preconceived ideas.

### Sensory Processing Disorders

Information comes into the nervous system through many avenues, including touch, vision, proprioception, smell, sound, and taste. In many kids with special needs, the information coming

- It will underscore the value of supporting a program that has a continued and sustained impact in the church and community.
- It will ensure they are on board for any future events.
- It will help in your efforts to seek funding for future programs.

### Follow Up

Sometimes we forget that VBS is an outreach program. Your VBS program should be the beginning of an outreach effort by your church to the families of your community that continues throughout the year. Follow-up may include:

- Sending a card inviting them to visit the church again.

- Creating a yearly plan to bring the kids together periodically, such as a fall festival, Christmas party, Easter event, or church family social.
- Inviting them to be involved in the children's programs at your church such as Sabbath School, Adventurers, Pathfinders, children's choir, and/or sports ministries.

Don't miss this great opportunity to build a deeper relationship between the kids, their families, and your church.

### Important Resources for the VBS Leader

Check out the *Quick Start Guide for Vacation Bible School* and the *Quick Start Guide for Child Evangelism* booklets available from AdventSource at [AdventSource.org](http://AdventSource.org) or 402.486.8800. These booklets have invaluable information for the VBS leader.



- Many kids may not be connected with the church or have any religious background at all and will come to your VBS with absolutely no knowledge of anything religious or biblical. For this reason, we really need to get down to basics with our language and what we teach. Don't assume they know anything about the Bible.
- Prepare kids that come from your church to accept and join in with those who are visiting. Help them to know how to relate to the kids of the community and encourage them to make new friends and to witness with their words, behavior, and their own relationship with Jesus.
- When you interact with kids, use their names. We encourage you to use nametags. Learning a child's name builds a relationship with them and will make them feel special.
- Plan for kids with special needs, including kids who may need special assistance because of a disability. Integrate them into a Crew and assign a one-on-one volunteer. It is important that the volunteers you choose receive basic training beforehand. They will also need information from the child's parent/guardian. Be sure to communicate your plan to the child's parent/guardian as well. For more information, see page 9.

### **Plan a Sabbath Closing Program**

This important program allows the children in your VBS to share what they have learned and gives you the opportunity to invite their parents into your church. It also gives you an opportunity to express your thanks to those who helped out during the week.

- If possible, have your closing program on Sabbath morning following the last day of VBS.
- Plan a whole church potluck and invite the kids and parents to join you.
- Communicate this information to the parents with a copy of the letter on page 21. This letter goes out before VBS and invites the kids to the program as well as the parents to the "Family Event" closing program.

### **Budget Your Time**

- Plan on your one-week program taking at least three weeks of your time.
- You will need:

- The week before for concentrated preparation.
- The week of VBS to ensure that things run smoothly. Typically, the director is the first to arrive and the last to leave at the end of the day.
- The week after to tie up all the little details—returning borrowed props, tearing down and cleaning up, organizing your reports, and sending thank you cards.

### **Give Daily Updates**

- Before or after each day's program, bring as much of your team together as you can.
- Debrief what happened throughout the day (both good and what needs correcting) with them.
- Allow time for your staff to share something they experienced.
- Have prayer for the kids.

### **Appreciate Your Volunteers**

Appreciation is an easy way to affirm others and show that you notice them and recognize their efforts. This will go a long way in encouraging your helpers and others to volunteer in the future. Some ideas on how to appreciate your volunteers may include:

- Taking the time to recognize individuals publicly
- Saying thank you to them privately
- Sending them thank you cards
- Organizing an appreciation party for them after VBS is over

### **Make Final Reports**

It's important to share what happened at VBS with your congregation.

- Ask for a time to share some of your team's experiences.
- Recognize those who were part of the team and thank them.
- Have two or three kids share what they especially enjoyed.
- Write an article for your church newsletter or conference/union publication.
- Prepare a final report for the church board. Tell the board of any future plans you have for follow-up. This will serve three purposes:

from their environment can be overwhelming. Due to an atypically developing nervous system, the information from their senses may lead to a different response than expected. Sensory processing disorders (also known as sensory integration dysfunction) are a common symptom of many diagnoses, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), AD/HD, dyslexia, Down syndrome, and fetal alcohol syndrome. It is important to approach the needs of children with disabilities with particular care for their individual sensory needs.

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

Kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) demonstrate a varying degree of differences in language skills, social skills, repetitive themes and behaviors, flexibility, perspective-taking ability, and sensory responses. There will be some children who are non-verbal, avoid social contact with other children, and are fully consumed by repetitive activities. On the other end of the spectrum, there may be a child with more subtle differences in these areas; he or she may be highly verbal but confused by words with multiple meanings, seek social connections but make social errors or blunders, or be independent within structured settings but become anxious or frustrated with unexpected changes in routines. Understanding the unique set of differences that a child with ASD has can be critical in developing a successful plan to best meet their needs and realize their individual abilities and gifts. Parents/caregivers, as well as the child themselves, are your best resources for recognizing and anticipating any adaptations and accommodations needed.

### **Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)**

A child with AD/HD may have a variety of symptoms, including failure to attend to details, difficulty maintaining focus or paying attention to a task, a seeming inability to listen to directions, poor organizational skills, a tendency to fidget or squirm, difficulty staying seated, a tendency to be frequently on the go or constantly in motion, difficulty waiting their turn, and a tendency to interrupt others. These kids may be able to actively listen and engage in the program more successfully if given a fidget toy (Tangle®, Thinking Putty®, stress balls, porcupine balls, Brain Noodle®, etc.). A child with AD/HD will frequently respond well to visual aids for instructions, learning concepts, and routines. It is important to remember that a child with AD/HD may learn



differently than expected. Even if they are wiggly or don't appear to be listening during an activity, they may be absorbing all the information. Explaining the behavior you expect from them beforehand along with giving them gentle reminders will help a child with AD/HD to be successful in your VBS program. These kids also do well when given a meaningful task where they can direct their attention and energy.

### **Gross and Fine Motor Delays**

There are many reasons why a child may acquire gross or fine motor skills at a different rate than their peers. Gross motor skills include activities that require larger muscle movements and coordination; these would include walking, running, jumping, climbing, and kicking. Fine motor skills are activities that utilize smaller muscle movement and coordination, such as writing, tying, cutting, or buttoning activities. These kids may have difficulty participating in games or crafts and will require adaptations of the activity or assistance to participate. These children may appear to be clumsy or have difficulty standing in one place. Some kids with motor delays may be hesitant to participate in certain activities due to fear of failure or feelings of incompetence. Positive encouragement and patience is important part of their success in a VBS program. Having a buddy available to assist when needed or asked will also be a valuable part of this experience for a child with motor delays.

### **Physical Disabilities**

These kids may utilize an assistive device such as a walker or wheelchair or will have noticeable difficulty with mobility and coordination of their arms and hands. These kids may have a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy, stroke, spinal cord injury, or traumatic brain injury. They may

need extra time to transition between stations. If a child uses a wheelchair, create space to allow them to sit with their group. This might include removing a chair in a row or at a table. Anticipate potential barriers or obstacles in your VBS environment that may limit access to the different activity stations. These kids may also require additional support to participate in activities at the game or craft stations. If they are unable to participate in a game, a positive alternative would be to give them a special job such as scorekeeper or team captain.

### **Down Syndrome**

Down syndrome is a genetic condition that can cause a variety of delays in the development of both physical and cognitive skills. Although difficulty with thinking and learning is common in Down syndrome, it is typically mild to moderate. These kids are fully capable of understanding the message of the Gospel. VBS is a perfect opportunity to demonstrate the message of unconditional love and acceptance that Jesus offers to everyone. Because there is a wide spectrum in abilities among individuals with Down syndrome, it will be important to refer to the child's parent/caregiver for areas in which they may require adaptation or assistance. Some common characteristics you should be aware of are limitations in reading, writing, communication skills, self-care, and attention span, as well as gross and fine motor delays.

### **Learning Disabilities**

Learning disabilities manifest themselves in a variety of ways. A child with a learning disability may have difficulty with reading, writing, reasoning, listening, processing written or spoken directions, and communication. It is important to recognize that their behavior may be due to not having understood the directions or frustration at being unable to complete a task with the same level of ease or skill as their peers. You should also give them directions verbally and demonstrate visually what they're supposed to do as often as possible, rather than giving them directions in written form. A child with learning disabilities may also need extra time or prior notification to read or memorize Bible verses.

### **Visual or Hearing Impairments**

A child with a visual or hearing impairment may present with a wide range of skills for interacting with their peers depending on prior experience and opportunities. Due to their impairments, they may be more hesitant to engage with their peers and may gravitate toward adults instead. It will be important for a child with a visual impairment to have a buddy who is able and willing to communicate detailed information about their surroundings and the activities that are taking place during VBS. A child with a hearing impairment may have an assistive device such as a hearing aid or cochlear implant. Though they may have varying levels of ability to read lips and to communicate verbally, you may need to assign them a buddy who can communicate with them through sign language if one is available.



## **DIRECTOR'S TIPS**

We are excited that you will oversee planning this year's VBS! It may seem like a monumental task, but effective recruitment of volunteers and distribution of duties will make your job much easier and more enjoyable. If you are at a large church, you may want to consider recruiting an assistant director. Start planning early and distribute duties early enough to give your volunteers adequate time to get the creative energy flowing. Build the excitement by keeping the members of your congregation informed and inviting them to pray for this outreach event.

### **Planning for Success**

#### **Pray**

The best step to success is to dedicate your efforts, your volunteers, and the kids attending to the Lord and pray for His presence at your event. Be specific in your own prayers. Pray for:

- The presence of the Holy Spirit
- Volunteers who love kids
- Patience for all who work with the kids
- Kids to grow in their faith
- The parents of the kids
- God to use your VBS to draw kids and their leaders closer to Him

#### **Plan Ahead**

- Adapt the proposed timeline included in this guide to your situation
- Assign your team members early
- Include them in the planning
- Determine your budget
- Shop early to find the best prices

#### **Involve Your Pastor**

It is important for parents and kids to get to know the pastor. Also, this will help your pastor see the importance of an active children's ministry program in your church. Assign your pastor a job in his or her comfort zone.

#### **Begin Volunteer Screening**

It used to be that our only worry with children's programs was finding enough people to volunteer. Unfortunately, that is not our only worry anymore. We must think in terms of protecting all kids from physical harm and abuse while they

participate in VBS programs. Likewise, all adult staff members must be aware of their moral responsibility to report suspected situations where a child may be an abuse victim. They also need to be trained in how to appropriately supervise children and interact with them.

All churches should have a child protection and volunteer screening/training program in place before the start of the VBS program. Check with your local conference office for their guidelines on screening volunteers and establishing a child safety program.

#### **Keep Leaders Informed**

Make a written request to the church board for your budget and include the dates and times you want to hold your VBS. Make requests to Sabbath School division leaders and any others whose room or supplies you wish to use to ensure that everyone is informed of your plans.

#### **Stick to the Budget**

- Work with your team to build your budget or find out what has already been allocated for your VBS budget.
- Be sure the church board approves your budget.
- Look for diverse ways to save and cut expenses. Shop early and compare prices online. Often, there are donors in the congregation and your community who are happy to help support children's events like VBS.
- If you underestimate your budget, discuss it with the board early on. It may require your team to do some extra work to get more money or cut expenses.

#### **Remember That VBS Is an Outreach**

VBS is an outreach program for kids. Some churches may use the opportunity to include an adult program at the same time, and that's great! There are just a few things to remember as you work with the kids in your community.