

Children's Ministry ideas: How to engage children and families while sheltering at home

by Jamie Nace

- **Storybook time**
 - Have pastors make video recordings of themselves reading a storybook. Post the videos on social media.

- **Facebook Live Events**
 - Share Bible stories and even run a mini version of a Sunday school class or junior church program. Just as worship services can be done via social media, so can your children's programs.
 - Be sure to check your privacy settings before hosting to know whether or not your event can be viewed publicly.
 - This format is nice because there is a bit of interaction as people can post comments and questions throughout the event.
 - Here is a sample format for a basic children's event on Facebook live:
 - Welcome everyone by name as they "enter" the event.
 - Begin a fun check-in question and encourage families to type their answers in the comment section. You can ask things like:
 - What's your favorite flavor of ice cream?
 - What do you love doing at home right now?
 - Do you have any pets at home or a favorite stuffed animal?
 - Opening prayer
 - Share a favorite Bible Story. The Shine! Bible from Brethren Press and MennoMedia is a great resource for Bible stories.
 - Note – you can ask children to share what their favorite Bible stories are and then you can read those stories during future online events.
 - Sing a song or two
 - Do a craft together – choose easy materials that children can gather ahead of time. As you work on the craft live, the children can do so at home.
 - Closing song and/or blessing
 - Say goodbye to each child and family.

- **Other Facebook Live Options:**
 - Is someone in your church musical or crafty? Maybe someone really loves to cook? Have them host an event for children that features those skills. They can run a mini music class, craft class, or cooking class. Providing fun activities like this can give parents a bit of a break and they mean so much to the children!

- **Events on Zoom**
 - You could host a formal Sunday school class or game night, or you could just host a hangout time centered around lunch or dinner where families join together. Add in a prayer time and Bible story for a more worshipful experience. Just being together and seeing each other, even virtually, is so meaningful for children.

- Note – Do not share the Zoom link for your meeting on Facebook (unless it is in a closed group). Email that information to participants instead. Also, make sure your Zoom meeting includes a password.
- **Service projects**
 - Make a list of people from your congregation who can't usually attend church under normal circumstances due to poor health or other issues. Ask families to make cards/pictures and mail them to the people on the list.
 - Have families make "thank you" posters for frontline workers (doctors, nurses, grocery store workers, etc.). Deliver the posters to a local hospital, nursing home, or store.
 - Children and families can pick flowers or paint rocks and place on front porches in their neighborhood.
- **Including Children in Sunday Worship**
 - Include a time for children in your regular live or prerecorded worship service (if you're doing one). Options include:
 - Using a video clip of a child reading scripture (be sure to get parent permission before posting and do not use the child's last name in the video).
 - Using a video clip of someone reading a story for the children (this is a great way to utilize people in your congregation who normally do not like to present in front of people).
 - Using a video clip of someone doing an object lesson for children based on the scripture theme for the day.
 - Using a song in the service that is familiar to the children. It doesn't necessarily need to fit the theme. When the children see something is included especially for them, it will be meaningful.
- **Stay in touch!**
 - Consider adding a children's ministry private group on Facebook. Keep the group limited to parents, grandparents, pastors, and perhaps some other church members. This is a great tool to post ideas for families and to just check in.
 - Email parents to gather prayer concerns and needs. Follow up with those who share.
 - Call parents who do not utilize social media.
 - Find a good balance of contact. Parents are feeling very overwhelmed. Having something for children and families once or twice each week is probably good but you know your people best.
- **Pray!**
 - Pray for your children and their families. Ask for God's peace and provision.