

Wednesday at the Well

There are screaming laughing kids in church today. They are giggling, wiggling, smiling, and tumbling groups of boundless energy. Filling the pews, playing outside, eating dinner and joining together in worship: children are learning, growing and sharing together in the loving grace of God.

Jesus said let the children come to me and here at Plainville United Methodist Church we have taken that to heart with our Wednesday at the Well program. Originally dedicated as an adult contemporary time, our program has morphed and developed into something so much more. Sensing the need for our children to have a place of fun, fellowship and food we have expanded year by year until we now welcome over a hundred children youth and adults each Wednesday night as we eat, have worship, play and learn.

Our goals are to help strengthen the young of our community physically, emotionally and spiritually. We do this in several ways including having physical activities like a mini color run on our first day back this year and feeding balanced meals such as spaghetti or chicken and noodles with sides and vegetables. We also offer only three rules during our Wednesday program: be safe, respect and have fun. We do this because we believe that offering positive reinforcement through a reward system where they earn fake money for the Methodist market is better than a negative impact system. The Methodist Market is a big draw and children can earn money or the Pastor Claire Buck, the Wesley Five and the Son Ten by attending services, helping their teachers or the pastor, be caught doing something good, bringing their bible - or a friend, having a parent volunteer, perfect attendance, etc. We also give the youth opportunities to help their community. They have been involved in raising money for the senior citizens lunch program, giving food for Easter boxes for the less fortunate, collected food and books for community programs, Christmas caroling for the nursing home and our shut ins and more.

A typical night schedule is food at 6 p.m., worship from 6:45-7 p.m., and then classroom or fun time until 7:45 p.m. This year we are dedicated to the five senses of touch, smell, sight, hearing and taste. We plan on exploring our senses and relevant scriptures to "sense" God in other ways. For example, one month was dedicated to taste and we explored Jacob and Esau whose tastes, although they were twins, were different. After discussing how Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup through a game and story time we are going to be making stone soup for everyone to taste and see that the Lord is good.

We average more than 100 adults and children on Wednesday with the highest this year ranging in the 150s and the lowest at 107. Our classes are broken up by age and size and differ each year. This year they are the nursery for children younger than pre-kindergarten; pre-kindergarten to second grade; third and fourth grades; fifth and sixth grades; junior high; and senior high. This doesn't include guests, volunteers, adults or teachers who are sometimes involved in the children's classes or in their own bible studies.

It takes a lot of dedication and work to make our Wednesday program happen. Our teachers volunteer their time and talents to each classroom, our committees provide the meals, our young provide the minds and our whole congregation roots us on in our endeavor to bring God to the youngest of our

community. We welcome you as well - if you are ever in Plainville, Kansas, maybe just driving through or wanting to experience a Wednesday of fun, please think of joining us.

Rev. Claire Gadberry, Plainville UMC