

Vallejo Drive Church Encourages Kids to Connect With God

BY ARAYA MOSS



(Top left) Through a learning-style test, attendees discover whether they are dynamic, creative, pragmatic, or analytical—which reflects their teaching style. (Above) Vitug gives a demonstration to illustrate how little time Sabbath School teachers spend with a child each week. He points out that the role of discipling kids doesn't solely rely on the church; the church is to equip parents to disciple their children.

into two parts. The first half consisted of a mock Kids Connection set-up so that attendees could visualize what the church does every week. The second half consisted of sessions led by Vitug and Isaac Kim, family ministries pastor at Calimesa church. They explained the philosophy behind the new curriculum, provided tips to revamp Sabbath School programs, and discussed methods for teaching at different levels.

The goal of this dual training was not simply to tell other churches to replicate this program at their church; rather, it was to demonstrate how one church identified a need within the congregation and community and found a way to meet that need.

"We are in a different generation," said one attendee after the training. "It's time to change what we are currently doing in order to obtain different results."

What if Vacation Bible School (VBS) was not limited to one week during the summer but was incorporated into Sabbath School each week? This was the question that Audrey Zorek and Pastor Manny Vitug asked each other when discussing ideas for children's ministry at a VBS training last March.

Zorek, children's ministry director at Vallejo Drive church, wanted to revitalize this ministry at his local church. Vitug, Southeastern California Conference (SECC) children's ministry associate director, invited Zorek to a Sabbath School curriculum training at Los Angeles Central Korean church last May. SECC had recently launched Growing Together, a new Sabbath School curriculum designed to reinstate the importance of family worship. With Growing Together, everyone studies the same lesson with peers at their own developmental level each Sabbath in hopes that the material will be reinforced later in the home.

Shortly after the training last summer, Vallejo Drive launched Kids Connection for lower division Sabbath Schools using this curriculum. Kids Connection is Vallejo Drive's interpretation of Growing Together. "We wanted to make a difference in our children's lives," said Zorek. "Kids

Connection is a safe and fun place where kids learn how to connect with each other and with God."

This new format introduces the lesson by bringing all kids together—from primary to youth—for 30 minutes, involving them in an opening song, offering, and a short story before they break out into separate classes. There, all teachers will go over the same lesson, taught in a way that is most appropriate and effective for their respective age groups.

Attendance at Kids Connection doubled from 30 to 60 kids in just two months since its inception. "My children love this new program!" recalled a parent. "I had a hard time getting them to church for Sabbath School. Now they are up early, rushing me not to be late, because they don't want to miss it."

"My favorite part is the connectiveness of all the kids coming to worship together and learning the same story," said Kelly Fontamillas, Sabbath School teacher at Vallejo Drive. "A bonus for me as a teacher covering multiple classes: no matter what class I teach, they will be studying the same lesson."

With the success of this program, Vallejo Drive hosted SECC's recent Growing Together Sabbath School curriculum training, available to all churches. The workshop was divided

CORRECTION: The Southern California Conference Communication Office would like to apologize for not giving full credit to the author on one of our articles from last month's issue. The article entitled "SFVA Takes the Classroom on the Road" (March 2020, page 52) was written and submitted by Joel Kindrick.