

CONNECTIONS

SPRING 2000

COME AND CELEBRATE

The first week of November, 1999, 150 women gathered at Camp Caroline in central Alberta, Canada, for a regional Coffee Break convention. Together we celebrated God's blessings through Coffee Break in Alberta and Saskatchewan. It was my honor to be a part of the events of the weekend.

The energy created was contagious as we worshiped together, prayed together, learned together and shared our lives together. Centered around the theme "Designed to Shine," we drew closer to one another and to our Savior. We became convicted one more time of the importance of being light to a dying world.

Wonderful events like this one in Alberta have happened across the U. S. and Canada throughout the fall season. I hear the stories and marvel at all God is doing. He is so good! He is changing so many lives through *Coffee Break, Story Hour and Little Lambs*. Many of you, like me, have been privileged to taste just a little piece of all He is doing. What joy it brings!

We have much to give thanks for. We have grown from a single small group in South Holland, Illinois, to an international ministry circling the globe. In addition to Coffee Break in English, we have a Korean Coffee Break ministry and our Spanish version, called *Sobremesa*.



"Transplanted" leaders take Coffee Break with them wherever they go—to China, Scotland, Japan, Korea, and places in between. More than 1,030 Coffee Break programs are "officially" in our database, and no doubt others may be meeting that we don't know about. Over 40 different denominations are involved. Between 18,000 and 22,000 women meet weekly to discover who God is through Coffee Break's inductive Bible study.

Now we're facing a new millennium and an opportunity to celebrate together once again all that God is doing in and through Coffee Break, Story Hour and Little Lambs. This year marks thirty years of God's blessing on Coffee Break. **ENCLOSED IS THE REGISTRATION BROCHURE FOR COFFEE BREAK/STORY HOUR CONVENTION 2000.** Won't you please plan to join us in Grand Rapids as we celebrate God's goodness?

To commemorate our thirty-year journey, we've compiled a sampling of stories of lives which have been changed through Coffee Break. Written by Marie Van Antwerpen in a beautiful, devotional way, they represent hundreds of similar stories. If you come to the convention you'll receive a complimentary copy as part of your registration package. Please consider prayerfully being a part of the festivities. You won't want to miss the blessing!

Betty Veldman,
Coffee Break and Small Groups International Director

COFFEE BREAK E-MAIL CONNECTIONS CONFUSION

We've had a few "bugs" in our e-mail group and we're trying to work them out. So far we've been unable to chat as a group, but have been able to respond to one another individually. That's nice, but it's not how we envisioned having it work. Our goal is to have group discussions. Please be patient with us.

On another note, some of you have switched e-mail servers or have had other problems with the e-mail group. When you change servers you need to unsubscribe under your old e-mail server and resubscribe with the new server. To unsubscribe, simply send a message to crcnews.hmcb@crcna.org with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line of the message, nothing else. To resubscribe, send a message to crcnews.hmcb@crcna.org and put the word "subscribe" on the subject line. If you already have a new server and can no longer unsubscribe under your former server, please let us know and we'll have it done manually for you.

Thanks for all your input. We enjoy hearing from you. We look forward to better serving you in the future. BV



Coffee Break



Small Groups



Story Hour Little Lambs

Register by April 15 for the Coffee Break/Story Hour Convention

THINGS ARE HOT IN ALASKA!

Though the weather was chilly according to my desert blood, things were warm and wonderful for the Coffee Break/Small Group ministries in Alaska. As the Regional Rep for Coffee Break and Small Groups in the Pacific Northwest, I visited Anchorage, Alaska to do some workshops and presentations. I was met at the airport with a big sign announcing Coffee Break that was held by my gracious hosts, Jim and Barb Bol. With indefatigable energy, they not only shuttled me back and forth to six different events, but also took two days of their time to show me the sights. Those sights can only be described as “scenic overload”—absolutely awesome, even for my eyes which are accustomed to beautiful mountain and ocean scenery!

But it was not the scenery which warmed my soul! It was the love for Coffee Break and the spirit of the women who dedicate themselves to this great program that touched me. Not only did several of them come out for at least three meetings with me, but they also shared with me how Coffee Break has grown in their region because of their dedication and the Holy Spirit’s blessing.



Trinity CRC in Anchorage has birthed two other Coffee Breaks in different towns which are “mothered” by women who moved to those towns. Not only did they give birth, but also they nurture these new babies, making sure they are encouraged and guided. I was also able to connect with the Korean CRC, and they also hope to have their own program soon.

As I talked to all these women, the stories flew as they shared with me how God is changing lives in their community because of Coffee Break. One woman came after being lovingly pursued for 30 years! Another leader shared how the child-like faith of two women in her class

keeps her blessed and serving. After Trinity’s church fire last December, another church in the area opened its doors so that Coffee

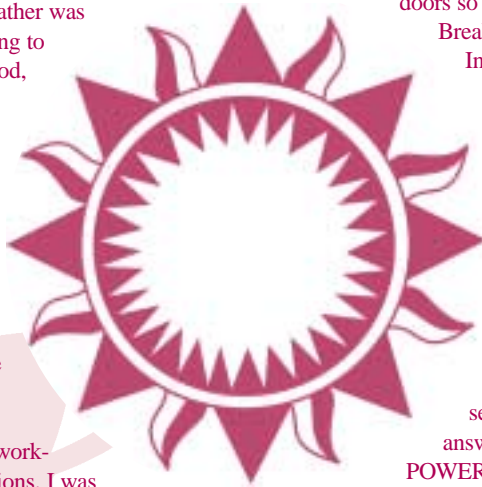
Break could continue.

In a town where military personnel come and go and the numbers in their church and programs fluctuate constantly I asked them what kept them serving? Their answer? “Gods

POWER keeps us going!

Praise the Lord!”

I left the chilly Alaska weather with my heart and soul warmed by the hospital-



ity and reception I received, but even more so by the incredible love for Coffee Break and Story Hour that these women have. How thankful I am that the same thing can be said for so many other programs.

God is working mightily through these two avenues of ministry and all of us involved are continually being blessed. I encourage all of us to keep focusing on the mighty power of the Word of God to grow in the lives of children and women with whom we come into contact because of Coffee Break, Story Hour and Little Lambs! My prayer is that the deep desire to “bring the uncommitted into a vital, growing relationship with Jesus Christ” may be what propels and energizes us too.

Mary Werkhoven,

Pacific Northwest Small Group Representative

FAREWELL TO OUR EDITOR

With this issue of *Connections*, we say goodbye to our editor, Aileen DeJonge. In just three short years Aileen has used her creativity, her organizational gifts, her tenacity and pursuit of excellence to not only coordinate and write the newsletter, but to also move small groups forward in ways we had not previously been able to. It was Aileen’s dream to



develop a database for Coffee Break, Story Hour/Little Lambs, and small groups so we could run queries in several configurations. She made her dream come true. She moved us into the 21st century in many ways, always pressing the edge of excellence.

But more than providing incredible skills, Aileen has been a wonderful friend. She brought to us the richness of her faith, her passion for evangelism and her servant heart. She has been an invaluable asset to all we do.

Just one short year ago, on January 10, Aileen and her husband, Shawn, endured the pain of losing the precious firstborn, Elyse Marie, after only ten days of life. They are now awaiting the arrival of their second child, due the end of January. Though they under-

standably have a whole mix of emotions, they are trusting the God who loves them to protect both Aileen and their soon-to-be-born child. Please join us in thanking God for all Aileen has contributed to the work of small groups and Coffee Break, Story Hour, and Little Lambs. Pray too that all will go well in the birth of their baby.

Betty Veldman

Editor’s Note: It has been my great privilege to serve you as Connections’ editor these past few years. God has blessed me through you as you shared your stories, ideas and your dreams for Coffee Break, Story Hour and evangelism. It is with a full heart that I leave you, knowing God has fulfilled His purposes in our time together and in me. Writing for Connections (previously Coffee Times) has been my ministry, but also my reward. Thank you!

Aileen DeJonge

As always we covet your ideas and your stories, please continue to keep us informed. You can contact your new editor, Marjo Jordan, via email at jordanm@crna.org, by calling 1-888-644-0814 or by writing to Coffee Break Evangelism at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave., Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

CELEBRATE CHILDREN IN 2000

As we begin a new millennium, we're reminded of the most significant child who ever lived. The years of time are counted before he lived, and after he lived. Who is this person who split time as we know it? Of course, it is Jesus!



- Welcome daycare children from women in the Bible study
- Announce SH/LL on the local radio station or local newspaper
- Organize summer play groups in the park
- Print CB/SH 'business cards'

There is a large evangelistic endeavor in progress called *Celebrate Jesus 2000*. The goal of this exciting initiative is to pray for and share Christ with every man, woman and child in North America by the year end 2000. You may roll your eyes and sigh as you ponder such an ambitious goal. Impossible you say? Humanly speaking, yes. But with God, don't we believe that all things are possible? Imagine that every Christian used every means possible, whether it be mass media, written page, word of mouth, the internet, etc. Does the goal seem a little more reachable? Remember, it doesn't say that we will "convert" everyone, or that we will bring everyone into our churches. It simply says we will show them Jesus.

How many children are there who need to know Jesus? Well, how many children are there? In our ministry to preschoolers, we have the wonderful opportunity of reaching children at a very young, impressionable age. They are eager to learn of God's love, especially as it is extended through caring leaders.

How can we reach more children in 2000? Here are some ideas from Story Hour and Little Lambs leaders who attended a fall rally in Michigan and other events in Iowa, South Dakota and Minnesota:

- Pray
- Invite more mothers
- Place notices/advertisements in the mall, the library, etc.

- and hand them out as invitations
- Place CB/SH flyer in bags from leader's garage sales
- Plan a fashion show and invite women from the community
- Host a carnival for children and hand out CB/SH flyers
- Participate in local town parades where SH children ride on a float and CB leaders distribute flyers to parade viewers

My challenge to you is this:

1. Ask how your program can reach more children.
2. Set a numerical goal if you wish and be ready to provide the necessary staff.
3. Continue to pray always, knowing that the God who loves the little children even more than we do, will draw these little ones to himself.
4. Celebrate Jesus with the children!

Diane Dykgraaf,
Story Hour/Little Lambs Specialist



WAYS TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

- Smile a lot
- Look into their eyes when you talk with them
- Listen to their stories
- Tell them how terrific they are
- Be curious with them
- Let them act their age
- Inspire their creativity
- Tolerate their interruptions
- Daydream with them
- Accept them as they are
- Be spontaneous
- Appreciate their individuality

From "Futures for All Families" 150 Ways to Show Kids You Care.

KIDS VIEW OF EASTER

Children ages 3 to 5 have difficulty with abstractions such as death and resurrection. They can't make analogies for simple things let alone an abstraction like resurrection. In these early years, children may have no understanding of death's finality. In their concrete thinking, being dead and coming back to life are much like going to sleep and waking up again.

How can we help?

1. Focus on the fact that Jesus is alive.
2. Re-enact the Easter story using hand puppets or other visuals.
3. Have children retell the story.
4. Use short prayers or simple one-line songs to help children praise God that Jesus is alive.
5. Walk through the children's daily activities, and at each step of the way talk about how Jesus is alive. For example, lay on the floor and pretend to wake up saying, "Good morning, Jesus;" bless a pretend breakfast; pretend to play with Jesus; say a prayer before a pretend nap.

Adapted from *Children's Ministry* magazine,
March/April 1996



Story Hour
Little Lambs

STORY HOUR

MORE OF A CHILD

"There is no such thing as 'adulthood' in spiritual life. I've become convinced we only learn how to be 'more of a child' if we're really growing; more of a child in tenderness, responsiveness, teachability, shapeability, and correctability by the Father through His Spirit and His Word. In a number of years, we will all be forever but children, however wise life's lessons may seem to have taught us to become."

Quote from *The Power and the Blessing* by Jack Hayford



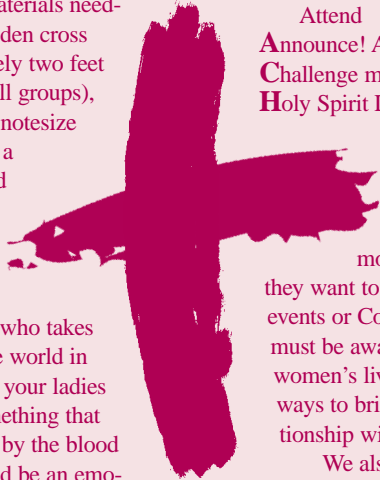
idea share



Coffee Break

EASTER IDEA - COVERED BY THE BLOOD

Prepare yourself. This activity is powerful. Materials needed are a wooden cross (approximately two feet high for small groups), newspapers, notesize paper, tacks, a paint brush and red tempera paint. Read John the Baptist's reference to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world in John 1:29-34. Ask your ladies to write down something that they need covered by the blood of Jesus. This could be an emotion, a struggle, a temptation or a specific sin. Then have them tack their note onto the cross. You, the leader, spread newspapers down generously at the foot of the cross, pick up the paint brush, coat it with the red paint and COVER the entire cross and all the notes. Conclude by singing "Just As I Am" or the second verse of "It is Well With My Soul." This vivid picture of a red-drenched cross, Jesus' sacrifice and the coverage of all our sins will stay in the memory banks for a long time.



Story Hour Little Lambs

MIX 'N MATCH STORIES AND SONGS

Mary Rice Hopkins' recording, *Sing-Along Miracle Songs*, contains New Testament Bible stories that may coordinate with your Story Hour lessons this spring. See the list below for those songs that 'match' the Story Hour curriculum stories. Try playing music as the children enter, during opening playtime, during the craft or learning activity, or while eating the snack. Play after the story as a review. For a closing activity, ask the children to help you "think" of motions to go with some of the words.

This recording is available in cassette or CD from CRC Publications at 1-800-333-8300.

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STORY SONGS AND MATCHING STORY HOUR SESSIONS:

Song

- Bartimaeus
- Peter Get Up
- A Little Bit of Love (chorus and 1st verse - story of the 5 loaves and 2 fishes)
- Walking and Singing

Story

- Use with Story Hour Year 2, Unit 5, Session 7
- Use with Story Hour Year 2, Unit 6, Session 9
- Use with Story Hour Year 1, Unit 3, Session 2
- Use with Story Hour Year 1, Unit 3, Session 4 (Jumping for Joy)

REACHING Women

How can you encourage non-churched women to attend your events? In order to REACH these women we may have to do some things differently. When thinking about reaching out into your community through special events, especially through Coffee Break studies, it might help to think of REACH as an acronym.

- Rethink Everything
- Encourage Non-churched Women to Attend
- Announce! Announce! Announce!
- Challenge members
- Holy Spirit Led

In order to attract non-Christian women, we need to think like women who are without Christ. What motivates them? Why would they want to come to one of our special events or Coffee Break Bible studies? We must be aware of what is important in women's lives. These things become ways to bring them to a meaningful relationship with Christ.

We also have to be careful what we name our events. Titles like "Only Jesus" and "He Lifted Me" won't be attractive to many women, especially non-Christian women. Instead of "A Study of I Corinthians 13", why not "True Love," or "A Love That Never Ends," or even "The Love of Your Life." Make your themes and titles something your non-Christian neighbor would find intriguing and want to investigate. Struggle with how to REACH them for Jesus.

NEW MILLENNIUM, NEW LOOK!

You may have already noticed, but we have new logos for Coffee Break and Story Hour/Little Lambs!! We've freshened up the logos a little to welcome the new millennium. In case you haven't seen them before, here they are!

Hard copy of these logos for use with your Coffee Break and Story Hour/Little Lambs promotion is available to you by calling 1-888-644-0814. Or if you would like to download the logos onto your computer, you can access them through our website address at <http://www.crcna.org/hm/hmec/hmec10485.htm>. You will be asked to abide by some general guidelines for their use, but you can then freely use them in your various promotional needs.



Coffee Break Small Groups



Story Hour Little Lambs

MUSICAL COLORS FOR EASTER

Form a circle with a chair for each child. Tape a yellow, red, green, or white piece of paper to each chair. Discuss with the children the meaning of the colors: yellow reminds us that God loves us; red reminds us that Jesus died for us, green reminds us that God can grow in our hearts, and white reminds us that Jesus is alive! Play music and have children walk around the inside of the chairs. When the music stops, have children sit quickly. Call out one of the colors. If the children are sitting on that color, have them jump up and shout what that color reminds them of.

Children's Ministry Magazine, March/April 1996

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A Small Group and
Coffee Break Evangelism
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SMALL TALK

FOR SMALL GROUPS

SPRING 2000

DIFFICULT PEOPLE IN SMALL GROUPS

Here are some frequently asked questions:

1. What do we do about people who want to be in a group, but who no one wants in their group because of their personality or character flaws/weaknesses?
2. What do we do when this person is in a group and others want to leave because of the effect he/she has on the group?

Dave Stark of *Church Innovations* provides some answers:

In attempting to answer these questions, the place to begin is to try to determine what the nature of the behavior is that is pushing other people away. If it is a season of pain, that person may need to have an additional place other than just this small group to receive support. If it is a character or personality trait that is pushing others away, then it has to do with the small group's covenant and maturity of the group members.

Some small group covenants will make it okay to begin to confront, in love, the nature of the problem within the group—which is the best of all worlds. Two things need to be true to accomplish this difficult task: both the spiritual and emotional maturity of the other members has to be high enough for them to realize that the body of Christ sometimes calls us to love what we do not naturally love. A lot of commitment is necessary to go this route, but it is the best.

Sometimes you have people that genuinely have psychological or behavioral disorders that need a different context than the particular small group.

In this case, it is important to distinguish between pastoral care and pastoral counseling. Small groups can care, but are not usually built for counseling. It is a matter of helping this person find a context in which these things can be healed over time.

Once in a while the behavior is such that some love by the members will actually make a huge difference. I knew a small

group where a man that attended the group was a street person who rarely took a shower. He was hard to get within 10 feet of without your eyes watering. After a group meeting, I saw three Christian women tell him that they were glad he was attending, but asked if he would be willing to take a shower before he came next time. From that point forward, his hygiene changed significantly. Praise God for this one!

What you should *not* do in these situations is dance around the person. Do *not* cater to this person in ways that are obvious to everyone *except* the difficult person. **Being straight-forward is by far the best, though hardest, route in this situation.**

Some small group covenants will make it okay to begin to confront, in love, the nature of the problem within the group—which is the best of all worlds.

WELCOME TO A NEW REP

Peg DeBoer has the distinction of beginning the new millennium as the new Small Group Representative for Alberta and Saskatchewan. Peg is from Calgary, Alberta, and has considerable experience in small groups. For a number of years she was a Coffee Break leader and director in her church. It was her positive experience there, and seeing lives changed through studying God's Word, that gave her a passion for outreach as well.

But Peg's experience in small groups has expanded far beyond her work in Coffee Break. For the past five years she has been involved in small group coordination and leadership in her church. She continues to see how God is using small groups to build authentic community in his Body.

It was God's continued nudging that prompted Peg to apply for the small group position. She brings with her a deep love of people, strong organizational gifts, and a desire to connect people to one another and to the heart of God. Her warm, relaxed demeanor makes her easy to relate to. Her personal journey has given her an empathy with people who have known some of the trials of life.

We look forward to what God will do through Peg in this new chapter of small groups in Alberta and Saskatchewan. She would love to serve you in whatever way she can. You can reach her at 2804 49th St SW, Calgary, AB, Canada, T3E 3Y2. You can also call her at 403-246-4619 or reach her by e-mail at pegdb@hotmail.com. Welcome, Peg!




Small Groups

SMALL GROUPS



Small Groups

SMALL GROUPS FOR THE FUTURE

Did you know that the presence of small groups is a world-wide indicator of a healthy church? In his book, *Natural Church Development*, Christian Schwarz shares the results of an extensive research project that took him to all five continents and every kind of Christian church, large and small, thriving and dying, prominent and unknown, charismatic and non-charismatic, persecuted and state-subsidized. It meant analyzing and tabulating more than 4.2 million responses. In the end, just eight qualities were universal to thriving churches. Having holistic small groups was one of them.

In fact, the researchers state that if they were to identify any *one* principle as the “most important”- though their research indicates that the *interplay* of *all* basic elements is important-then it would most definitely be the multiplication of small groups. **The research confirmed that the larger a church becomes, the more decisive the small group principle will be with respect to further growth.**

The research also showed that for small groups to have a positive effect on both quality and numerical growth within a church they must be *holistic* groups that go beyond Bible discussions to apply its message to daily living.

Churches that did not value small groups cited a variety of reasons. Either

they had few small groups to offer, or the small groups they had were not focused on meeting the needs and concerns of their members in a holistic way. Or they either didn't multiply their small groups, or they merely tolerated their existence, viewing them as a strange subculture of sorts. Those churches, however, were not thriving either spiritually or numerically.

Since simply imitating the successful models of other churches works in only the rarest cases, it is important to identify the principles behind holistic small groups in growing churches. The practical steps that need to be taken to improve the quality of a church's small groups will be determined by that church's starting point.

Where are *you* in regard to small groups? As a starting point, consider “mapping” your current small groups to see which ones are thriving and why. Also look into what areas may be struggling. We learn lessons from what doesn't go well too.

In subsequent issues of *Connections* we'll discuss some practical steps for implementing holistic small groups. But embracing the value of small groups will be foundational. Prayerfully consider letting go of any preconceived expectations so you may be open to

seeing how small-group principles can fit specifically for your situation. Trust that God's plan for your church is perfect.

Betty Veldman
Small Group Ministries Director

Small Groups Are More Important Than We Think!

SOBREMESA LIGHTS UP CALIFORNIA

The atmosphere was electric as 200 Spanish-speaking women from 15 different churches met together in Southern California for the third annual Sobremesa Small Groups

Conference. After experiencing disappointment with last year's attendance, they offered childcare this time and more than doubled the numbers! Making accommodations for 110 children was the biggest challenge and is the area in which they hope to make improvements.

Based on the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, the theme of the conference was “Prepare Your Lamps.” The main speaker Norma Najjarro, the workshop presenters, the rousing music, and the drama on the parable of the ten virgins all challenged the participants to seriously commit their lives to Christ and consider their responsibilities as his followers. The women listened intently, many taking notes as they considered the challenge before them.

Hispanic Small Group Representative, Sonia Alvarez, emceed the event and led the lively worship time, accompanied by her tambourine and two gifted guitarists. As always, Sonia's genuine love for the women she serves and her passionate love for Christ radiated and warmed the hearts of her audience. Many expressed a desire to meet yearly to renew their faith commitment and to learn how to share that faith with others in the small group setting of Sobremesa.

Dianne Wolf of the Sobremesa Committee writes, “We have been truly lifted up by this year's conference results. Next time, with the Lord's blessing, we will reach even more women. They have a need and a hunger for what we have to offer. We feel honored and blessed to be able to participate in the extension of God's kingdom and the strengthening of His people. Please continue to pray for us, and that He will prepare many more hearts to seek His face.”



NEW MATERIALS

Beyond the Agenda • by Jessie Schut
This book helps any group of leaders grow into a spiritual community.
Available February 18.
#151535CT **\$7.95^{US}/11.55^{CDN}**

Rebuilding Relationships
from the Discover Life Series
Leader #153235CT \$5.35^{US}/7.75^{CDN}
Study #153230CT \$3.25^{US}/4.70^{CDN}

The Genesis Message • by Harvey Smit
This advanced study provides a thought-provoking look at the stories of Genesis. An introductory sample chapter is also available.
#150475CT **\$7.45^{US}/10.80^{CDN}**

Zechariah • by Hans Boersma
This advanced level Revelation series offers a large print edition of the study guide.
Leader #150055CT \$6.50^{US}/9.45^{CDN}
Study #150050CT \$4.75^{US}/6.90^{CDN}

Discover Your Bible revised studies are now available on Romans, James, Thessalonians and The Sermon on the Mount.

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