



CELEBRATING the past **WELCOMING** the future

#6 FEBRUARY 2010



Children and Youth at Newport

Christmas pageants, coin banks, sweet singing, campfires, worship leadership, deputation missions, Vacation Church School, youth elders, confirmation classes, 4th grade Bibles . . . Children and youth have always been central to Newport's mission.

Sunday School

"One of the greatest blessings and at the same time, greatest problems of our church has been the tremendous attendance at our Sunday morning church school classes," a Newport member wrote in the 1966 annual report. In the previous year, Sunday school enrollment was 372 — higher than the entire church membership! Each Sunday, more than 50 adult members were needed to teach, and classrooms were packed to overflowing. Newport rushed to finish classrooms on the lower level, and added soundproofing and carpeting to dampen the noise. Church school enthusiasm continued throughout the 1970s, with weekly attendance of more than 200. The overcrowding was finally relieved in 1979, when four new classrooms were built.

Countless dedicated adults taught Sunday school over the years, some for 10 or 20 years in a row, raising several generations of children on Bible stories, arts and crafts, songs, and activities. The nursery hosted many babies, a children's choir thrived off and on, and children's worship and enrichment activities were offered during the second service. Sunday school attendance began to drop in the 1990s as other activities attracted children away from church. Since 2003, our teachers have been using the workshop rotation model, with art, cookery, story, drama, puppetry, and Bible games. In 2010, both Sunday School and the nursery are on an upswing of attendance and participation.

Vacation Church School

During the 1970s, Newport's Vacation Church School was known as "one of the largest and most beneficial summer programs in the area," attracting up to 200 children for two weeks, including many visitors. These numbers decreased over the years, but VCS continued for many summers, creating memories of ferry rides, sloppy joe and watermelon feasts, picnics on the lawn, and carnivals. In recent years, the church has experimented with new formats for VCS, including intergenerational events and family picnics.

FISHPOND Preschool

In 1978, the new classrooms and many experienced, enthusiastic teachers allowed Newport to begin Fishpond Preschool. Each weekday morning, Fishpond offers high-quality, Christian-based classes to 2, 3, 4 and 5 year olds from many ethnic backgrounds and religious experiences. By 1993, the school grew to maximum capacity of 75 children — later expanded to 84 — and began to offer an afterschool program. Fishpond is now self-sustaining with paid staff, and Newport offers classroom space and scholarships for children who need financial assistance.

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Youth Fellowship

Sunday evenings at Newport belong to the youth, whose fellowship activities over the 50 years attracted many mid-high and senior high students, and sometimes grade schoolers as well. The goal, as one youth advisor wrote, was “to put our lives in order physically, morally, spiritually and to interest and stimulate growth from within.” Toward that end, students have done Bible study and held discussions about Christian faith, forgiveness, relationships with parents, world hunger, boyfriend/girlfriends, choices, and effective ways to deal with anger. They also engaged in hands-on service projects, such as serving breakfast or sandwiches at First Avenue Service Center in Seattle and serving dinner for Bridge Ministries.

But fun and fellowship have always been central, too. The youth slept overnight at church, ‘kidnapped’ new members, sang and played drums and guitars, and played basketball in the Great Hall. They also enjoyed such outings as swimming, bowling, roller and ice skating, skiing, sledding, sightseeing, canoeing, biking, movie going, scavenger hunts, partying, and camping, as well as retreats and conversations around the fire. Also, more recently -- scrapbooking, laser tag, Frisbee golf, broomball, and trampoline dodgeball!

The newest fellowship group is the PIPs (Parents, Infants, Preschoolers), who gather for a “Parenting Faithfully” Sunday School Class and occasional fellowship events.

Dep!

One of Newport’s most wonderful youth traditions began in 1971, when nearly 30 young people and their leaders, backed by the prayers and support of their church family, went to the Spokane Indian reservation in Wellpinit, WA, as the first youth deputation mission team. Every year since then, Newport has entrusted its high school students – and sometimes mid-highs as well – to represent them in showing God’s love to low-income and disadvantaged rural or inner-city communities in Washington State and beyond.

For many, these Youth Deputation Mission Trips have served as the culmination of their childhood Christian experience, a life event much anticipated and enjoyed. Typically, each trip took eight to ten days during the summer, with at least five days on site; our youth have led Vacation Church School for local children and also done hands-on building or repair. Afterwards, they enjoy a few days of rest and recreation. Many trips involved service to native American tribes, but some went farther afield, to California, Alaska, Mexico, Chicago, and Puerto Rico. Several trips involved hardship: no running water, no electricity, sleeping on hard floors, working in intense heat and sun. Several times, the bus broke down! Often our youth were hot and dusty, hungry and thirsty. These young people, who grew up in Bellevue or nearby, had a chance to experience hardships and to know the joy of helping others in need. Middle school students often went on deputation missions, too – shorter trips, often to nearby camps, to do repairs, painting and clean-up.

Children in Worship

One of the great strengths of Newport is the way we value the presence and leadership of our children in our worship services. Starting in the 1970s, 5th and 6th graders served as acolytes, wearing robes and carrying the Bible and Communion cup into the sanctuary. Today, each worship service offers a children’s homily, which is an age-appropriate version of the day’s scripture, and the high school youth lead worship once a year. Most recently, in 2006, Newport broke new ground by training children to serve Communion.



Answers to January Questions

1. In the 1970s and 1980s, Newport helped several Southeast Asian families resettle in the area. What were these families' names? Ta, Ngo, Taing, Phon, Mual, Neang, Philakham, Siphanthong, Nong, Kuoch, Ung.
2. What are the most distant places Newport ever sent a youth deputation mission? Coventry Cathedral, Britain, 1976; Alaska 1979 and 1997; Mexico, 1989, 1990, 1995, 2001, 2004, 2007; Puerto Rico 1999 and 2010.
3. In what year was Newport church membership the highest? In 1989, membership totaled 675. Today it is 420.
4. In what year was Sunday School attendance the greatest? In 1965, Sunday school enrollment was 372 -- higher than the total membership of the church! Average attendance stayed above 200 throughout the 1970s. Last year, average attendance was 31, out of 64 registered students.
5. In what year was annual financial giving the greatest? In 2008, we received a total of \$617,189 in pledge plus plate giving. That did not include total capital campaign contributions of \$1.3 million from 2006 to 2009.