

## Teacher Affirmation

To support your Sunday school teachers, schedule a number of ways to recognize and thank them during the year, not just on the last Sunday.

- Include teachers in the life of the congregation. Many members of the congregation do not know the Sunday school teachers, especially members who do not have children. Provide name tags for Sunday school teachers so other worshipers can easily identify who is involved in Christian education. Consider photographing each teacher with his or her class and displaying the photos in a gathering space. Pray for teachers by including them on a prayer chain or mentioning a different teacher and group of learners each week during the prayers of the congregation. At the end of the Sunday school year, plan a time during all services to recognize and thank teachers for their time and talents.
- Provide fellowship opportunities. Provide "teachers-only" treats in a special location such as an office or meeting room. While they pick up a snack, teachers can talk with each other about their group, the day's lessons, or a specific challenge. Post a message board for teachers to share celebrations and concerns.
- Connect teachers with parents and guardians. Some parents and guardians may not interact with their child's Sunday school teacher very often. In the newsletter, weekly bulletins, and on the Web site, encourage parents and guardians to meet their children's teachers and to pray for the Sunday school program. Invite families to honor teachers by sponsoring a radio broadcast, giving flowers, or donating library books in the name of their child's teacher. Teachers might want to plan a special Sunday school session for children and their families to attend together.
- Support teachers in their own learning. Provide teachers with resources like devotional books or study Bibles. Order helpful resources to keep in the church library. To increase interest in these new library materials, ask a few teachers to

read them and write reviews that you can distribute to all teachers. Let teachers know about magazine articles, newspaper clippings, Web site addresses, and other helpful handouts that pertain to teaching and interacting with children. Many teachers will appreciate more information about current topics such as divorce, ADHD, and media influences. If there is significant interest in a particular topic, plan a training session about it. Helping teachers better understand how these issues affect learning also helps them see the difference they can make in the lives of kids.

- Celebrate the teaching ministry throughout the year. Thank your teachers at the end of the year by planning a celebration of their service. Host an evening meal or plan a coffee hour after worship. Provide an opportunity for all children and youth in the Sunday school program to write or draw their thanks, and display these thankful words and pictures during the celebration. Consider having a Picture Day, when every class is photographed outside the church or in front of the altar. Give each teacher a picture of his or her class, and create a Sunday school photo book each year that contains all the pictures. (Many adults who grew up in the church look fondly at these end-of-year pictures whenever they visit their childhood congregations!)
- Affirm the contributions of each teacher. Remind all teachers that they have positively affected every learner during the year. Since traditional academic methods of measuring success, like test scores and grade advancement, are not used in Sunday school, some teachers may question whether they made a difference. Emphasize the importance of Sunday school teachers on the faith development of kids. Remind the teachers that seeds sown during Sunday school may take many years to bloom!
- Offer a small gift to teachers. Teachers will brighten up at the sight of a gift and message as they check their mailboxes or enter their classrooms. Follow these suggestions or use your creativity to think of others:

- Sticky note pads: Thanks for sticking with your kids!
- Rubber band: You help your learners stretch!
- Tea light candle: Thanks for sharing the light of Christ with your learners!
- Small bag of peanuts: We're nuts about you!
- Seed packets: Thank you for planting seeds of faith!
- Candy: You sweeten Sunday school!
- Bottle of water: Thanks for quenching your kids' thirst for Jesus!