

Wesley Memorial Kids: 2023 Vision Statement

At Wesley Memorial Kids, the Children's Ministry of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, we aim to bring Bible stories to life through creative activities and lessons that keep kids engaged. We want every child to love God's Word and understand the value of applying it to their lives. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and it communicates his truth, his heart, and his purpose for the world. It is the final authority for faith and practice, inerrant in the original writings, infallible, and God-breathed.

Wesley Memorial Kids selects curriculum based on how well it provides a Bible-centered, faith-based experience for the whole child. We selected Go! Curriculum, our main curriculum, in 2020 because it takes children chronologically through the Bible each year, but it also lines up with the Christian calendar (studying Jesus' birth at Christmas and Jesus' resurrection at Easter). It's creative, fun, and gives kids a regular opportunity to respond in faith and become a follower of Christ.

Wesley Memorial Kids also purchased new Bibles in 2020 so the children could read the scriptures at an appropriate reading level. The Bibles in each classroom are now the NIRV translation—the New International Reader's Version—which is written on a third grade reading level. This provides a huge shift in how children interpret scripture together. For example, earlier this year (2023) a 4th and 5th grade class read Colossians 1:21-22 from the NIV (New International Version), and it said, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation."

These two sentences contain four big words that children don't encounter every day: *alienated*, *reconciled*, *blemish*, and *accusation*. The NIV is written on a 7th grade reading level. Yes, the 4th and 5th graders could read these words, but they were a little harder to pronounce and a little more difficult to understand. So interpreting the passage as a whole was going to be a challenge.

But then the 4th and 5th graders picked up the NIRV Bibles in their classroom and read, "At one time you were separated from God. You were enemies in your minds because of your evil ways. But because Christ died, God has brought you back to himself. Christ's death has made you holy in God's sight. So now you don't have any flaw. You are free from blame."

All of a sudden, they understood what Scripture was saying. Instead of stumbling over individual words, they were able to drink in the whole concept of the passage. It is life-changing when a young person can read God's Word in their language, the language of kids. That's our driving question at Wesley Memorial Kids. *How can we communicate God's love and God's Word in the language of kids?*

Kids experience and understand love through fun and time spent together. Kids have fun each week as they learn about who God is through meaningful games, storytelling activities, small groups, and interactive teaching.

Our room environments and lessons are designed to help children grow and stay engaged. We're passionate about supporting them in each stage of life, so we provide options from birth through 5th grade during Sunday Funday (Sunday mornings at 9:45). Sunday Funday begins in the Praise Room. This is where kids learn to love praying together, reading God's Word out loud, and worshipping God together through song and creative expression in Spirit and in Truth. No matter their age, children were designed to praise God, and the Holy Spirit can move in and among them in powerful ways. Kids love to worship!

Kids love to move! They are physical. Kids ages 2 - 11 (up to 5th grade) are invited to our Wednesday Games & Gospel experience (6:00-7:30 PM) which begins with dinner, crafts, and worship. Every week at Games and Gospel, leaders get the kids in the gym, outside, or around the church running, jumping, chasing, and racing their way through games with a purpose. The purpose of the game may be to build community, solve a puzzle, get the wiggles out, find something, or to simply laugh together. The games lead to lessons and activities that reinforce Biblical truths. When children leave Games and Gospel, they know they are loved.

When parents commit to attend church regularly, their children build relationships with leaders and other children and gain the support and confidence they need to grow in their faith. Likewise, when parents commit to spend time in God's Word and in prayer with their children, their children grow in their faith. That's why we seek to equip and encourage families with devotional materials and children with age-appropriate Bibles.

Wesley Memorial Kids staff and volunteers regularly pray for the families and children that come through the doors of the church. We send postcards to kids just to say "hello" and "thanks for visiting" and we send birthday cards to every child. We seek to equip and encourage families in every way and are always looking for ways to grow family discipleship.

Children are precious to Jesus. At Wesley Memorial Kids, safety is one of our highest priorities. That's why we have a secure check-in system, and if we need to contact a parent during the service, we can either send a text message or call. Every Wesley Memorial Kids Volunteer Leader or staff member who regularly works with children, whether paid or volunteer, is required to attend regular Safe Sanctuary training and have a background check. We are committed to providing a nurturing, safe environment free from verbal, emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

For children with special needs who might need a little extra support to participate in Wesley Memorial Kids, we want to connect with parents to make their experience amazing and partner the child with a trained volunteer who can keep them engaged. We are in the process of learning how to minister effectively to children with special needs so that everyone has what they need to join in the lessons and activities and connect with others and God at Wesley Memorial Kids.

Here are some of the events we host each year to minister to different age groups, reach kids with the Gospel, have fun with kids and families, and incorporate them into the life of the church:

- Children's Nativity Play
- Gingerbread Bash Family and Church-wide Event
- Nerf and Nachos 4th and 5th Grade Event
- The Talk: Embrace the Sacred Gift -Workshop for Parents and Preteens
- Swim Party
- Laser Tag
- Weekly Children's Sermons at 11 AM Traditional Worship
- Easter Worship Presentation
- Easter Eggstravaganza Family Event
- Easter Escape Room 3rd-5th Grade Event
- Music and Arts Camp
- Vacation Bible School
- Weekly Sunday Funday (Nursery 0-2, Sunday School classes for 3-year-olds through 5th grade)
- Weekly Games and Gospel program (during the school year for 2-year-olds through 5th grade)
- 3rd Grade Bible Presentation
- Fall Worship Presentation
- Fall Trail Family and Church-wide Event
- and so much more!

Wesley Memorial Kids values keeping kids safe and having fun with them because that is how they feel loved. We aim to communicate the Gospel to them every time they come through the doors for any event. That means they leave here having heard that they can trust Jesus, and if they put their faith in Him they will be saved. We strive to communicate the truth that God keeps His promises and He will never leave them.

"Let the little children come to me," he said. "Don't keep them away. God's kingdom belongs to people like them." Luke 18:16 (NirV)

"Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end." Matthew 28:20 (NirV)

"God has breathed life into all Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using Scripture, the servant of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing." 2 Timothy 3:16-17