

A Step-by-Step Guide for Preparing for Vacation Bible School when it doesn't come from a box

Early February, before Ash Wednesday

1. Determine the dates for VBS and a theme

We have found that the first full week after school lets out to be a good time, as many families plan vacations soon after that. If winter-weather days build up over the school year, we do run the risk of having the year extended by a week, so we are moving to schedule VBS in the 2nd week out from the last day of school.

Choosing the theme is an open process, and we have found that sticking to a theme for which there are stories in the Bible to be helpful in keeping our planning on track. Ideas that have come up in the past but not yet used are:

- Baptism, water stories and imagery
- Lesser-known people of the Bible
- Faithful children in the Bible
- One story for the whole week that has many aspects to be explored, like Joseph (relationship with siblings, courage in slavery)

Early March

2. Contact planners for each part of the ministry

- a. Let them know the theme
- b. Establish a calendar for planning progress

This will give enough time for collecting any materials that will be needed. In the past we have set a date of May 1 for draft plans and materials lists so that we can put out a call for donations from members and have time to order what cannot be collected by donations.

What has worked well in past years is keeping in mind the materials we have stockpiled at the church as we plan our activities. This has meant that we keep our costs down while also being good stewards of the gifts and donations that others have given through the years. Some of the most fun activities tend to be the simplest in terms of planning and execution!

The people who have prepared the activities/ministries in the past are--

Music: Margie Baker

Story: Ministry with Children coordinator

Crafts: Barbara Byrum

Snacks: Ann Moag

Games: Brenda Swearingin

Art/Atmosphere/Props: Melanie and Shane Carrico

End Worship: Ministry with Children coordinator

* For contact info, please refer to your parish contact book that was distributed at the annual meeting in January. If you do not have this, you may contact the parish administrator for peoples' emails and phone numbers.

Early April

3. Establish an online registration form from St. Andrew's webpage and start advertising.

Dana Gaspar has helped with this in the past
We've charged \$10/child for the week

4. Check in with the different ministry planners to remind them of May 1 date for materials lists and plans and to answer any questions, follow up on any concerns.

5. Order a sign for the front lawn

Contact Christ Hill at The Printery (parish administrator can help you with their phone # and email).

If you tell him the theme and the Bible stories to be used, he comes up with a great design and puts the pertinent St. Andrews registration info on it. Cost will be \$50-75 and can take 3-4 weeks to complete

Mid April

6. Create 5 documents, each to hold a list of the materials needed and activities for a day of VBS. This means 5 different lists, and we've found it helpful to label them with the date and day of the week. As people send their plans and materials needed to you, paste these plans/materials into the appropriate days' document.

Early May

7. Put up the VBS sign

The white wooden frame is usually stored in the room behind the couches in Herman Hall. There are several pieces to it, and it's about 5 feet tall. If you can't find it, you can contact the junior wardens, the sexton, Betty Atwell, or Glenn Strohl (people who spend a lot of time in the building and its many storage spaces, they should be able to identify where it's been moved to).

8. Get 5 large plastic bins from the Ministry with Children Resource Room (right by the acolyte vesting room) and tape paper labels on them for each day of the VBS week. Keep these bins in a common place where people preparing for VBS can access them.

9. Tape each day's list of activities and materials to the appropriate bin.

Look in the Resource Room for materials that are needed which our ministry can already provide. We have *a lot* of materials, and we like to use them up first as much as possible! We tend to have 30-35 participants at VBS, so materials should be enough for this.

When you've found the materials needed, put them in the appropriate bin, check it off from the list and write your name next to the material so everyone else will know it is covered.

10. Make announcements to the parish about the specific materials you need for VBS and ask for donations by May 21 or thereabouts.

Late-May

11. Order whatever materials cannot be gained in other ways

This can be costly, so we try to avoid it as much as possible. Even more costly is last-minute orders because of shipping, so we really really try not to do this!

12. Recruit volunteers

a. Area leaders (see the categories for planning above) – often this is the person who planned the activities, but not always. Nor can you assume that this person is available because of work or other conflicts. This person's responsibility is to guide the activity and make sure he or she has the help needed (support volunteers) to set up materials.

b. Support volunteers. Look to EYC (youth) and other adults who can attend to children's needs and help them transition from one activity to the next.

c. Welcome team We need 2 people (from the support volunteers). They sit at the door and greet each participant as they arrive, mark their attendance, and note any info that the parents or guardians dropping them off may convey. They should also remind that pick-up time is 11:50 and no later than NOON. They are also the people who at NOON check out each participant to make sure they are going home with the adult on record for pick-up. Often neighbors will indicate a common pick-up parent for many kids, and this is fine as long as the info is conveyed to the Welcome Team.

c. 'Camp Director' Finally, we need one person who is responsible for the overall flow of the day and transitions. This person will ideally not be an area leader or Welcome Team member so that they are free to coordinate transitions, handle situations as they arise, and greet the children and families in a more extensive way. This is the person who volunteers can come to with questions and be ready to offer extra support or a 'time-out' base if a child needs to collect themselves and spend a little time away from the group (not a punishment) If a parent needs to be contacted during VBS, this is the person who will do so.

Early June

12. Start keeping tabs on registration numbers, ask parents and grandparents who have kids at St. Andrew's if they're planning to attend (if they haven't already registered)

13. Create a volunteers email list and send a reminder to them about the dates and times of VBS. Ask them to arrive at least 20 minutes earlier than VBS start time to help set up the space and materials. (We do find that families start dropping off their kids sometimes 10-15 minutes early! When this happens, we try to fold the kids into helping with the set-up. This gives them a chance to provide service and also get a sneak-peek at the day's lineup.)