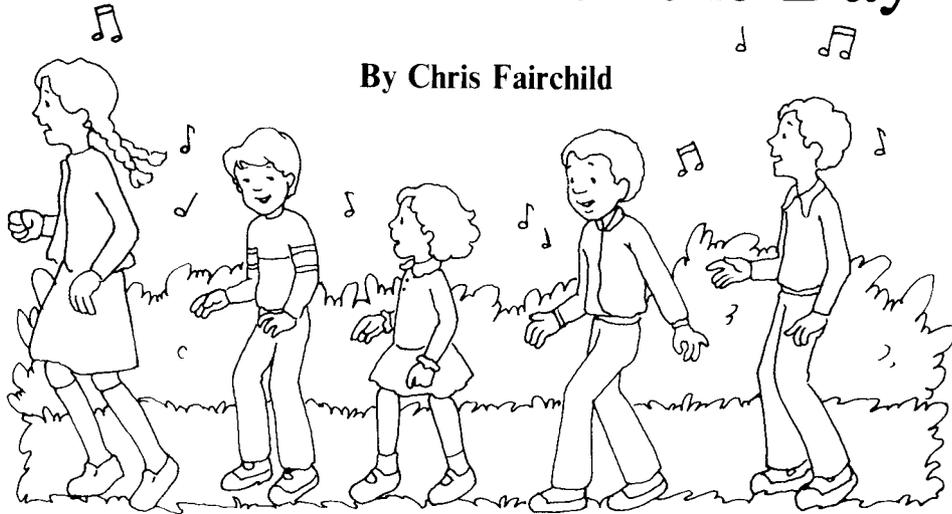

Morning Worship— The Best Time of the Day

By Chris Fairchild



“Onward, Christian soldiers!
Marching as to war . . .”

Out through the classroom door marched boys and girls from the tiny first graders through the middle graders to the tall eighth-grade boys. Down the hill, around the gym—squaring each corner—back down the hall to the front entrance. The children continued to sing lustily as they marched. Back through the hall and the gym, and with the last of the chorus:

“With the cross of Jesus
Going on before”

they marched back into the classroom. “I like to do that,” said Jeff, his eyes sparkling.

“Me too,” agreed Darrell. “It wakes me up in the morning and gets me ready for the story.”

Quickly the children settled down on the floor or in their chairs near the rocking chair where I sat waiting to read. (Today’s selection

was from *The Children’s Hour*, but on other days I might use *Bed-time Stories* or other suitable library books dealing with nature, missions, Bible characters, et cetera.) With some of their energy spent marching and singing with exuberance, the boys and girls were not as fidgety as they might have been without the exercise. Children can do more than sit and fold their hands during worship!

Where to Hold Worship

The place for worship periods can be varied. In the classroom it is good to have a special spot where the children gather around a couch, a rocking chair, or in a designated worship corner if there is room. However, when the spring breezes and daffodils arrive, then it is time to find a spot outside in God’s special corner. If you are fortunate enough to have your school in the country as we do, there are many choice places. Sometimes we sit on an old bridge close to the gurgling stream, or take our stories and songs out on

the grass beneath the big maples. We often sit in the pole teepees the boys made out in the woods.

When it is misty or the late May raindrops are pattering down, we sit on the patio, just out of reach of the rain, but close enough to hear the soft pitter-pat and smell the odor of new rain on the grass. In the fall we sit beneath the maples with their flaming reds and oranges, storing our minds with their beauty.

Sometimes in the outdoors we sit and talk about the things God created, how they must have looked at the beginning of the world, what lessons we can learn from them, and how they will be changed in the New Earth. This helps the children to see how they can take care of God’s creation now and points their thoughts to the importance of being part of God’s kingdom when all things have become new.

There is something about being close to the trees, streams, birds, butterflies, and flowers that makes it easier to talk openly about the

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child's desire to accept Jesus and be with Him throughout eternity. Singing songs like "This Is My Father's World," and "I Sing the Mighty Power of God" means more to the boy or girl who is observing God's world at the time. Encourage the memorization of hymns like these so that the child can sing them while he or she is at home or on Sabbath walks and can remember the lessons learned at school during worship time.

Hunting for Illustrations

At other times outside I read stories of many kinds, just as I do during worship periods in the classroom. Don't expect the children to sit ramrod straight with hands folded in their laps. As long as they realize that they must be quiet so as not to disturb others, let them lie on the grass on their stomachs, their chins resting on their hands. Let them lean back with their heads against a tree trunk or quietly play with small twigs that are always handy outdoors. Let them build miniature grass huts on the lawn or make stone paths from pebbles they find around them. Let them watch the water skippers and their dancing shadows on the surface of the creek. Don't be afraid that they can't use their hands and their ears at the same time. If you

don't believe this is possible, just stop in the middle of the story and ask for a quick summary of the last page or two.

Sometimes it is fun to send the children off for five minutes to find something that has to do with a person in the Bible. Other times they might be asked to find an item to illustrate one of the parables or miracles of Jesus. Very seldom will someone say, "I couldn't find anything." Instead, the children are eager to explain the story related to their find or ask others to guess what they have in mind. Stones, flowers, insects, old birds' nests, feathers, and more can be brought back to the group.

This type of activity can also take place without allowing movement away from the worship spot. Permit the children to use only their eyes to find things that remind them of Jesus. This is not really a difficult assignment, either. Eyes can see the clouds, the sun, the trees, the grasses and flowers, and the other children around them. Each of these can be related to the life and teachings of the Creator. Knowing and appreciating the things of nature will help tie the child to nature's God.

Of course, wintertime need not cut off worship period. Snow, with all its sparkling diamonds and

brilliant whiteness, quickly brings to mind Isaiah's "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," or David's plea, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Children can be reminded that Job speaks a number of times on the treasures of the snow, that the garment of the Ancient of Days was as white as snow. Later, inside the classroom, let the children search the concordance for other texts in which snow is mentioned.

Lessons From Singing

Along with the texts, teach the children to memorize the words of songs in the hymnal like "Lord Jesus, I Long to Be Perfectly Whole" with its chorus:

Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow;
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

"Look Upon Jesus, Sinless Is He" has a similar chorus:

Cover with His life, whiter than snow;
Fullness of His life then shall I know.
My life of scarlet, my sin and woe,
Cover with His life, whiter than snow.

Sing songs like these often on snowy days. Their message will mean more to the children when they can see that the soft blanket



of snow has covered the bare trees and the ground just as the robe of Christ's righteousness can cover their sins if they so choose.

I have mentioned several times that children should memorize the words to songs and hymns. Unless you take time to explain the words and meanings of the songs and sing them often enough during worship time and the music period, the children will rely on songbooks for the words. Since the younger ones cannot follow the words quickly enough to sing them, you must teach memorization. Even older children can sing with more enthusiasm when they are not glued to the book. Then, when you have outdoor worship times or even on your walks through the woods at recess time, you will find that the children will enjoy singing the songs and hymns that have become part of their lives.

Since "As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 292), it is important to help all of the children to learn to love the music that tells of God. Children can learn to appreciate the real music of the church if we are patient, persevering, and enthusiastic about it ourselves.

Stories Elicit Enthusiasm

Through the years I have found that above all other worship activities, the children like stories either read or told. They especially like me to read a book with chapter endings that give them something to look forward to the next day. Adventist Book Centers offer many excellent stories from which to choose. Mission and nature topics, along with stories of Bible people, seem to be favorites with my students.

When you read, put yourself right into the story. Read with great enthusiasm and expression



both in your voice and on your face. Stop at exciting spots and ask, "What do you think will happen now?" or make a comment such as "Oh, oh, somebody's in trouble!" You will know how much the children are enjoying the book when they plead at the end of the chapter: "Please, couldn't you read just one more chapter? We'll try a lot harder to get our work done."

If problems such as unfriendliness, lying, selfishness and a lack of sharing, or speaking bad words come up in the classroom, you can choose from the many stories relating those problems and others in *Bedtime Stories*. Lessons taught in those stories are listed alphabetically in the front of the books. Just as Jesus used stories to illustrate His teachings, so we can make use of the great number of books and stories available to us.

Bible sword drills are still a favorite with children. To make sure that everyone gets a chance, from the youngest to the oldest, you can specify that "This text is for everybody in the fifth grade, but anyone who finds it, stand up." Or you

might announce a text for those born from January through May, or for those who are ten or 11 years old, or one for first graders when they have learned how to find a text and read it. Instead of having the first one to find the text read it, you might wait till all are standing and then ask for an answer to a question about the text.

Sometimes you might write a text on the board and ask the children to stand when they find it. When all are standing, ask them to do what the text describes. For example, Psalm 47:1 asks us to "Clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph." Luke 6:23 tells us to "leap for joy." Genesis 21:6 suggests laughing. Psalm 33:3 calls upon us to "Sing unto him a new song." Make a list of action verbs, take a concordance and see how many texts you can find in which people are asked to do something.

Worship periods are good times to strengthen children's knowledge of the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Stories from such books as *Pioneer Stories* and *Spirit of Prophecy Emphasis Week* materials can be used. Older students can present material they have researched. Even younger children can read stories and then tell them to the rest of the class. Many pictures of the early pioneers are available from the education departments of local conferences. "Your Story Hour" is preparing tapes on the lives of early Adventists. One about William Miller is already available.

After stories like the falling of the stars or the dark day, children can draw pictures of how they visualize those events. As we teach in this area we should remember the wise counsel of Mrs. White: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way

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the next item of business is a search for an appropriate song to accompany the theme. If there is a songwriter in the group who could compose an original song, that would be ideal.

The theme song should be one that the students will love to sing throughout the whole week and one they will remember for a long time.

Have the theme placed in a prominent spot above the rostrum. Letters cut out of styrene foam and painted in appropriate colors can be most effective. Various members of the class can cooperate to produce these letters, which should be large enough to be visible throughout the meeting room.

Teachers can reinforce the theme by presenting lessons, ideas, and materials in their classes that will bring the concept to mind. As teachers support students in this way, the week will become more meaningful to the young people.

Songbook for the Program

Preparing a special songbook is a must to assure a successful week. The students will not only appreciate the book through the week, but also as a memento to remind them of the program. Select members of the class to be responsible for compiling the songbook, making sure that the presentation is adequate for the occasion. Do not put together a shoddily prepared book that will cheapen the occasion. It is better to spend a little more money and time than skimp in organizing this important adjunct to the program.

The theme and theme song should be placed in a prominent position in the songbook, which should include songs to be sung during the week, as well as a list of talks that will be given. It may be possible to include a photograph of each speaker with his or her

topic. The cover should feature an attractive picture or drawing depicting the school or the theme of the week.

Music should play an important part in the program. Invite students from every class in the school who can play a musical instrument or sing to participate in the song service. With a competent musical director—either staff member or student—music will be a highlight of the week. Students' special musical presentations should be arranged throughout the program to gain maximum student participation.

An element of surprise in regard to the theme chosen, the design of the songbook, or any special features will help to make the week something different, a time the students will look forward to with anticipation. Special features could include an appropriate film, a guest speaker, taped messages from former students, or an interview with a well-known local person. Of course, all special features must contribute directly to the theme of the week.

It is best to conduct the meetings in an area that will not be used for any other purpose during the week. If the school has a chapel, that would be the ideal location. If no chapel is available, an adequate assembly area should be chosen that will be used exclusively for the program.

Allow the students to decorate the meeting area with flowers and greenery to make it as attractive as possible. A little expense in decoration will help set a pleasant atmosphere for the program.

When Should It Be Scheduled?

Scheduling of the week of spiritual emphasis needs to be considered by each school. In some places I have found that inserting the week into the first month or

two of the school year has been beneficial to all students because it sets a spiritual tone and promotes unity in the student body from the very beginning of the school year.

In other locations I have found the program to be most beneficial during the concluding weeks of the academic year, as it then acts to promote spiritual togetherness and culmination of student spiritual relationships. Regardless of when the special week is scheduled, I believe it will be a blessing to all if it is planned so that it fits smoothly into the school program.

Try to ensure that the students enter into the week of spiritual emphasis as naturally as possible. Do not give the impression that it is going to be a week of "pressurizing." Schedule carefully so that attendance by the entire school is assured. This is essential. The school that prays together stays together.

Teachers should speak positively of the scheduled program and offer any assistance that will help promote its successful completion. As the staff members demonstrate their commitment to the importance of the week by faithful attendance, the students will take the week more seriously. If all the students and staff can enter into the week as a family seeking the fellowship of their heavenly Father, then the blessings of the meetings will last through eternity. □

Morning Worship

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the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."—*Life Sketches*, p. 196. Let us instill in our students a loyalty to the church before Satan gets a chance to snatch them away through false doctrines and indifference.

Flexibility

Be flexible in your planning for worship. Some days I have set aside the planned activity because the children want to talk about a problem they have had at home or in school. They might be worried about a relative or friend who has been taken to the hospital. A father may have lost his job. Neighborhood children may have asked them to try drugs or smoking. They may wish to discuss classroom problems or talk about being baptized.

If I find that the group can be of help to one who has a problem, or if the item of discussion is something common to the group, I let the children talk as long as they wish, putting in a word now and then to keep them on the subject at hand, or giving everyone a chance to speak.

Stories can be read any day. Plans can be changed. When children have a need and want to express it and get help, don't fail them. Try to keep the climate of the room such that no one will be afraid to talk freely. Make sure that every child knows that he or she will not be laughed at. Work toward building a family atmosphere, with each child interested in the welfare of the others. This is not always easy, since children come from such varied homes and backgrounds, but over the weeks it can be done. Pray without ceasing for this kind of classroom. Children should feel comfortable enough to share their troubles and joys freely. A hug and a smile, a nod of agreement that says, "I understand," can do much to help them over the hard spots.

Teaching the Sabbath School Lesson

Because many children do not study their Sabbath school lessons

as was the custom in years gone by, possibly because parents feel they are too busy, a summary of the lessons could be given during the Friday worship period. Since most church schools have multigrade classrooms, it might be necessary to touch on at least two different lessons.

During the week older children could teach younger ones their memory verses, which can be presented in unison on Friday. If a child is familiar with the week's lesson, he feels better about attending Sabbath school. You might even help children form the habit of daily study so that they can take part in the discussion on Fridays.

Your worship thoughts at the end of the week could also point to the importance and joy of attending church services on the Sabbath and the pleasure of welcoming the Sabbath that evening. Children can come up with new ideas for quizzes, Sabbath games, and other activities to make the Sabbath a delight at home. Many parents would welcome such ideas. Suggest that the children take Sabbath walks, looking for items of interest for worship time on Monday.

Boxes covered with contact paper or decorated in some other way should have a place in the classroom. In these boxes children can deposit their questions about the church, the Bible, and their relationship to God. Another box could hold secret prayer requests.

The Pastor's Contribution

Every week on the same day, the church pastor could come to take charge of your worship period. Very few pastors would turn down the chance to become better acquainted with the lambs of their flock, and teachers should welcome the opportunity for the church and the school to be more

closely tied together. Our pastor is much loved and his special worships are thoroughly enjoyed, so much so that one of my chubby first-grade boys greeted me one morning with: "I know what day it is today!" His eyes twinkled, and the grin spread all over his face. Of course, it's Tuesday, I thought to myself, but I asked him the obvious question. "Good for you, Matt. What day is today?"

With a huge smile of satisfaction he answered, "It's the day the pastor comes for worship." When Pastor Krause walked through the door a few minutes later, Matt was the first to run to him for a hug. From every corner of the room the children rushed to greet their earthly friend who every week is leading them to their heavenly Friend. When the children sit in church on Sabbath, the pastor is no stranger to them. They are more interested in what he has to say because they already know him from school days.

On these special days, or on any day, we invite parents who drive their children to school to stay for the worship time. It is good for children to know that their parents and teachers are friends, working together. It is helpful, too, for parents to see the values that the school holds.

Organizing the Worship Time

In our classroom a chairman is in charge of various activities for the week. He or she calls for favorite songs to be sung during the worship time. When the story or other activity is completed, the chairman asks for prayer requests and designates two of the children to pray. Sometimes he or she might call for prayer bands, dividing the class into small groups that are sent to the library, the hall, or other places in the classroom. All have an opportunity to pray, but if

a child prefers not to do so, he squeezes the hand of the one next to him, and that child continues the prayer.

Many first-graders or children who have transferred from other schools have never prayed or heard prayers in their homes. The teacher has a deep responsibility and a fine opportunity to teach these children how to pray. At first the teacher can say the words for the child to repeat. It doesn't take long until the child wants to "pray all by myself." I have often felt that the angels smiled at the sincere, heart-felt petitions that were spoken by some little one, praying for the first time on his or her own.

In all your planning for the worship period, in all your searching for stories, object lessons, new songs, and new ways to catch and keep the children's interest, never forget these words Ellen White wrote to teachers:

Your earnest desire for the present and eternal good of the children under your care should bring you often to your knees to seek counsel of Him who is too wise to err, too good to leave you in the helplessness of your own wisdom. If the teacher has learned his lessons from Jesus Christ, and has learned for the purpose of bringing these lessons fully into his own life, he can teach successfully. Those who are daily learners of the Great Teacher will have a most precious treasure house from which to draw things new and old.—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 183, 184. □

Community Involvement

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students recognize their responsibility to complete classwork and homework for the following day, and teachers cooperate in offering help as needed. This past school year we had more than 85 students involved in Teach-a-Kid.

• *Adventist Youth for Better Living*. This is a familiar organization on academy campuses. Last

year we concentrated on operating our conference health van and, with the help of area nurses, took more than 500 blood pressures at the county fair and gave away health-oriented literature. AYBL is also involved in a puppet program that travels to various high schools and elementary schools in the county and educates students in an attention-getting manner about drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

• *Bag It!* During this yearly activity our students go to the community and collect food to distribute in Thanksgiving baskets. This past year we gave out more than 300 empty bags and received a large supply of food that filled almost 50 food baskets.

• *Peer Care*. This program is actually an inreach activity. A group of our students meet once a month to share campus concerns and help their peers through friendship and listening. Christian concern can be truly demonstrated through Peer Care.

• *Church and Sabbath School Services*. This is also an inreach activity in which students are heavily involved in the planning and performing of duties in our Sabbath school and church service. Every week students teach the Sabbath school lesson, collect the offering, give the Scripture reading, prayer, special music, or ser-

monettes for the 11 o'clock hour.

• *Adopt-a-Grandparent*. This new program was enthusiastically received. Once a month students visit several elderly people in the Calhoun community, reading to them, cleaning their homes, and demonstrating their friendship. We have observed this to be a source of joy to both the students and the elderly people they visit.

• *Nursing Home Visits*. This activity is patterned after the traditional Sunshine Bands that have been operative on campuses for many years. Once or twice a month students visit the two nursing homes in town and sing with the older people, perform skits, and present a devotional thought.

• *Bible Studies*. This may be last on the list but it is one of the most important parts of our outreach activity. Students practice inreach by giving Bible studies in their own dorms, and then branch out into the community by holding Bible studies in the homes of interested local residents. The program has been a real inspiration to students who have been involved.

Many positive results of an active outreach program have been seen on our campus. Pastor Litchfield communicates frequently with the home pastors of our students by sending a form letter with a personalized note on the bottom

BIBLE TEACHERS EXCHANGE INFORMATION

SUBTEX, the Southern Union Bible Teachers' Exchange, developed out of a perceived need for communication and coordination of programs by academy Bible teachers and chaplains. Ideas for classroom projects and curriculum, weekend programs, outreach activities, and reviews of films and books are some of the items featured in SUBTEX, which is coordinated by Pastor L. W. Litchfield of Georgia-Cumberland Academy.

Persons wishing to receive SUBTEX or having materials to submit should send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to L. W. Litchfield, Georgia-Cumberland Academy, Calhoun, GA 30701.