

# HOW TO MAKE VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL A POWERFUL EVANGELISM TOOL

BY MARK ANDERSON

## Step One: Plan a Vacation Bible School

Augsburg Fortress ([www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org)) sells an excellent curriculum each year. The outdoor ministry sites offer "day camps" where camp counselors come to your community and help to facilitate a VBS Program. You can contact EWALU Camp and Retreat Center ([www.ewalu.org](http://www.ewalu.org)) or Riverside Lutheran Bible Camp ([www.rlbc.org](http://www.rlbc.org)) for more information.

## Step Two: Prepare to receive registrations

The success of using VBS as an evangelism tool depends on collecting the right information during the registration process. A spreadsheet application like Microsoft Excel or a database application like Microsoft Access will be most helpful. Here is an example of the information that will be necessary.

### Day Camp Registration Summer 2011

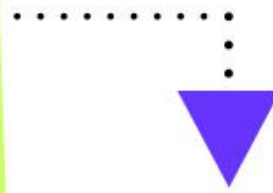
(Name) Lutheran Church, ELCA

Grade	Name	Address	City, State Zip	Phone	Church	Paid	Email
3	Anderson, Michelle	502 4th Street, SW	Hampton, IA 55512	(319) 352-1259	None	\$5.00	<a href="mailto:midnightball08@hotmail.com">midnightball08@hotmail.com</a>
4	Johnson, Ole	215 8th Place	Dows, IA 54235	(515) 465-1234	First Luth	\$5.00	<a href="mailto:busyboy@gmail.com">busyboy@gmail.com</a>

## Step Three: Outreach

If the Vacation Bible School is only announced in church, then only church members will participate. A two-fold outreach plan is the key. First, give member children an incentive to bring friends. For example, the child(ren) who bring the most friends to VBS get a prize like a Bible, an "Evangelist" pin, and special recognition at the closing worship. Some congregations offer the discounts on the registration fee as an incentive, like \$10.00 or register for \$5.00 for you and \$5.00 for your friend. Second, advertise to members of the community outside your own membership. Place posters in places that people who do not belong to a church might visit regularly, like the public library, the laundry mat, and the grocery store. Some congregations have handed out VBS registration materials along route of the local parade, and at local festivals. Here is a sample poster:

Faith  
Friends  
Fun



# Day Camp!

**When:** June 1-5, 2007

**Time:** 9:00—2:00 daily

**Cost:** Only \$5.00

**Where:** St. Paul Lutheran  
Church, ELCA 17 2nd  
Street NE, Hampton Iowa.

**More Info:** 456-3276



Don't forget the power of your congregation's web page to announce VBS and don't be afraid to email VBS information to your members and ask them to forward the email to their friends. Create an "event" on Facebook and ask your members, especially youth, to send the "event" to their facebook "friends."

### Step Three: The Final Night

At the conclusion of a VBS there is usually a final event, like a Sunday worship. Think of ways to make this a very visitor-friendly event, such as a Sunday morning worship service on the church lawn, a Sunday afternoon church picnic; or a Sunday night program in the church basement. Be sure that every VBS student and their families are invited to attend. You can show pictures from the VBS on a tag board or project them from a computer. It is always nice to serve a snack and to allow the children to sing, to show their arts and crafts, and to demonstrate some of what they have learned. Here is a sample of a postcard to mail to the family:



Of course, during the VBS you will also want to be in contact with local media of all types. Invite the local radio station and newspapers to visit, or submit a news release and photo to them. Here is a sample news release, but these often need a follow up phone call to the editor to get noticed.

**Contact: Pastor Sorenson**

Saint Paul Lutheran Church  
Phone (641) 456-3276  
Fax (641) 456-2287

17 2nd Street  
Hampton, IA 50441  
stpaulpd@earthlink.net

**Saint Paul Lutheran  
Church, ELCA**

# Press Release

## **Saint Paul Lutheran Church to Offer Day Camp**

June 1-5, 2007 at Central Park in Downtown Hampton everyone is invited

**Hampton, Iowa, May 1, 2007:** Saint Paul Lutheran Church, ELCA is offering a "Day Camp" for children entering grades 1-6 from 9:00am – 2:00pm daily June 1-5, 2011. The children will enjoy games, snacks, songs and, of course, Bible Study. The cost of registration is only \$5.00 per child and includes snacks and program.

"This children's program is something our congregation can offer to the whole community – every child is welcome" says Pastor David Sorenson, the new pastor at Saint Paul's. Lisa Bus, the congregation's Director of Christian Education, agrees "day cares, preschools, and whole families are certainly welcomed" she states. The week will conclude with a special program offering by the Day Camp participants at the Park on Sunday Morning at 10:00am.

The Day Camp will be led by camp counselors from EWALU Camp and Retreat Center in Strawberry Point, IA. The counselors are college students especially trained to lead Day Camps while working for the summer at EWALU, an outdoor ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

For more information parents are encouraged to call 456-3276 or visit church's web page at \_\_\_\_\_

### **Step Four: Follow-up**

Getting visitors to attend a VBS is only half the battle. The real trick to using VBS as an evangelism tool is to consistently follow up with each family. Use the data collected at registration to send regular invitations to the families to participate in congregation activities. The best action is to appoint a committee who will meet monthly to send follow up materials.

The **first** contact should be a thank you letter that includes an invitation for the child to come to Sunday school. A form letter can be produced using the records kept at registration; however, a hand-written note will be much more effective. Phone calls and personal visits are better than mailings, but the **best** is a combination like a hand written note with a follow-up phone call or a letter with a follow-up email.

Here is a sample of the first of several letters: It will be important to keep a record of which invitations families respond to. After a family has responded to one or two invitations it might be time for a member of the evangelism committee or the pastor to make a home visit.



Saint Paul Lutheran Church  
17 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NE  
Hampton, Iowa 50441  
641-456-3276

June 10, 2007

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you so much for allowing your children \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in St. Paul Lutheran Church's Day Camp June 1-5. We hope you were able to attend the festival conclusion at Central Park last Sunday.

We so enjoyed having \_\_\_\_\_ participate we would like to extend a special invitation for them to also take part in our WOW program on Wednesday afternoons. WOW is a fun packed Wednesday after-school program very similar to Day Camp with songs, games, snacks and always some fun Bible Study.

We also invite your whole family to join us for our Sunday morning ministries. We gather for worship at 9:00am followed immediately by Sunday School for children of all ages as well as coffee with your friends and neighbors for the parents.

Again, thank you for allowing us to get to know your children. If you have any questions about how to participate in any of our other ministries please call our pastor, David Sorenson, at 641-456-3276 or email the church office at \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_ or visit our web page at [www. \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](http://www._____)

Sincerely,

The **second** letter should be sent just before Advent, inviting the family to Advent suppers and worship services, as well as to the Christmas program and the Christmas eve/Christmas Day worship services.

The **third** letter should be sent a week before Lent inviting the family to Lenten Services and Lenten suppers. Be sure to include an invitation to Holy Week services.

A **fourth** letter should be sent in Lent inviting the families to consider sending their child(ren) to Bible Camp through your congregation. Do you offer a “campership?” You should mention this.

A **fifth** letter should be sent late in the spring offering the opportunity to register for next summer's VBS.

### **Pray without ceasing**

During this entire process be sure to ask the congregation to join you in prayer for the VBS program, the adults and children who will participate, and especially those who are in need of a church home so that they may be welcomed here. Ask the committee and church council to remember the project in their personal and corporate devotions and include this project in the prayers of the church.

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