



Inclusion Approach Models Autism to Let the *Son* Shine In

By Jim Pierson

We are please to share some basic information about a creative Sunday school approach at Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Ginger Forbes, the children's minister, worked with the architects who drew the plans for the children's' wing. The result is "Sonlight Village." "Along a lengthy hallway, there are signs and drawings that make the village look realistic. On Sundays, children rotate through six aptly named spaces:

Thou Art! Studio- Arts and crafts

Village Video: Movies

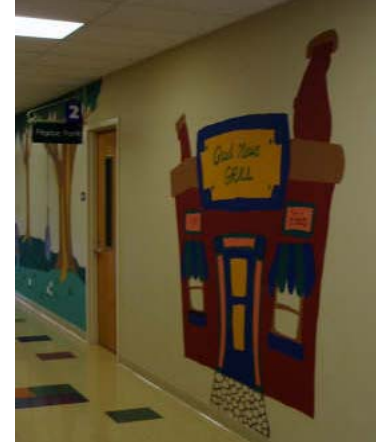
Sonlight Productions: plays and puppet shows

Temple Time: Concentrated Bible and resource study

Cyber Barn: Computer room.

Praise Park: Game room

These rooms are available to all students of all abilities.



Good News Grill

Because there were several children in the congregation with autism, Ginger wanted to be sure they were comfortable moving from activity to activity or they had a place to call their own. So, *Good News Grill* was developed. It is a beautiful, colorful, well-organized room full of children's recreational materials –games, stuffed animals, toys. There are attractive posters and pictures on the wall. The room is staffed by two "shepherds" whose job is to take attendance and to welcome, nurture and love the children and their families. They serve as an extension of God's love and prayer warriors for all the children in the room.

Children with disabilities feel at home in the Grill. It is a familiar space for them and can be a place to regain their composure. All children are given information to help them have a better understanding of their friends with disabilities.

A plus for this inclusion approach is its flexibility. An example is a child with autism might not like the auditory programs on the computer but would enjoy being a part of a video production. The goal is to have the child in the regular classroom if possible. So, the volunteers always look for the right time to make adjustments.

The real beauty of the program is its stated purpose: "Our goal is to cherish each child as they come to us, teach them about Jesus and work closely with their families to provide the best possible care for them."

The above is only a short overview of this program. More information about its teaching methods will appear in a future CCFH publication.

Looking for Sunday School Materials for Students with Cognitive Disabilities?

Question: I am on a ministry start-up team for my church. As part of this team, I wanted to know if you could point me in the right direction to find Christian curriculum written for children with special needs, in particular those with cognitive challenges such as autism and Down's syndrome. I believe you have written some Sunday school lesson plans. Any help you can give me would be greatly appreciated.

Response: In our Online Store at <http://www.ccfh.org/store/index.php?p=1#materials>, under Lesson Materials, you will find two publications, *52 Lessons for Persons with Cognitive Disabilities* and *A Place for Me in God's Family*. For prior review, email us at info@ccfh.org and we will send you a document that contains the table of contents and a sample lesson from each. The samples and publications are sent in pdf format. A copy may be saved to your computer so you can easily make copies and distribute as needed.

Exceptional Teaching Online, and *Adapting and Creating Special Needs Lesson Materials* are excellent resources for searching out and developing curriculum and lessons.



Plan now to attend the **Accessibility Summit 2008, Friday, April 4 and Saturday, April 5, 2008** at McLean Bible Church in Tysons Corner, Virginia. This annual event brings together people with disabilities, families and caregivers, churches, government agencies and community organizations. Jim Pierson will be a workshop presenter and panel participant. Click this link to view the brochure <http://www.mcleanbible.org/uploads/summit.pdf> or visit www.mcleanbible.org and click on Access Ministry in the left side menu bar or call (703)770-2918 for more information. This fantastic event enriches all who attend.

Lisa Copen – Ministry with the Chronically Ill

Rest Ministries serves persons with chronic illness. Lisa Copen, founder of Rest Ministries recently sent an email with news of the latest addition to the ministry. Rest Ministries Sunroom at www.restministriessunroom.com is a new social network set up last fall.

She also sent a copy of her article on effective church ministry with people who are chronically ill. Lisa's article, *6 Ways Your Church Can Effectively Minister to the Chronically Ill*, provides thought provoking ideas and guidance for promoting a welcoming church experience. The article in its entirety can be found at <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/51027> on the American Chronicle website among other locations.

Diagnosed with degenerative rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia, Lisa is an online entrepreneur who uses her internet knowledge and prowess to inform and enrich others. Visit www.restministries.com to learn more about Lisa and her powerful ministry.

Information in this CCFH Connections newsletter compiled by Sylvia Hemphill, Director of Administrative Functions and Resource Materials.