

Children's Choir Survey

Responses from members of The Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts, January-February 2009, to the question How do you recruit for your children's choir(s)? [Note: there is some overlap with related survey results that deal with scheduling. Sometimes the structure/timing of the choir is a selling point and an aid to recruitment.]

1

We have a children's choir grades 4-8. They meet on Wednesday evenings from 6-8, which includes 30 minutes of "blessings and bummers," where kids get to talk about their day and pray it up!

This is sometimes a highlight for them. There are competing activities which take kids out, but we always welcome them back when they are able. It is a tight wire act. The director has a year end party for them at her house which is a draw, along with singing out at other locations once or twice a year (also a draw). When they complete a year, they receive a charm (these are all girls), which is also motivating for them. They sing in worship once a month and we try to incorporate them into cantatas done by the chancel choir. Additionally, we have a handbell ensemble for jr high which meets on Sunday evenings before youth group. They are also not without conflicts sometimes, but we deal with it and keep working on ways to have them play out and play in worship. We are also doing a church talent show - which incorporates the kids and they are really getting into this. One kid is in 5 different musical offerings. This event is combined with the adults and we do it as close to Valentines Day as possible. This year - right on Feb 14. We use it for a Music Ministries fundraiser. In the summer we do a children's musical for two weeks 9-noon. That also gathers up boys and girls grades K-9. We get a lot of kids and friends of kids from the church and community. I guess, the busier you get - the better the kids seem to like it.

What have I done for recruitment? All of the above, plus 1-on-1 encouragement!

Jane W.

2

We care about our kids and our adults and our kids and our adults care for each other. We make time in rehearsals for caring and sharing. If I needed help, people would be knocking down the doors to help me.

We make choir important - to both the chorister and the parents (and those that bring them!)

We schedule ahead. We have a monthly choir newsletter.

The September and January issues include not only the singing schedule with anthems listed for the semester (our children's choirs each sing about once a month) but also important dates. For example, January choir notes includes mandatory rehearsals for our May children's play; mandatory parent meetings for junior high/high school choir tour; and the dates of our adult choir cantata rehearsal with orchestra.

Our rehearsals are structured so that we are always looking ahead at the next five or six anthems so that an absence doesn't cause the chorister to lose ALL rehearsal time on an anthem.

If a chorister knows he has to miss several rehearsals, he's welcome to take music home to keep up and knows that our choir director will assist on an ad hoc basis.

We do not belittle extracurricular activities. They are important. We may express our displeasure at activities being scheduled on Sunday morning. But the displeasure is directed at the system, not the star soccer player who also sings in choir.

If we have a particularly talented musician who is preparing for contest, we try to include the contest song somewhere in a worship service so the student has an additional opportunity to perform before an audience before contest.

The students in the larger school district our church serves have difficulty scheduling both academic and music classes. In our advertising we emphasize that we take time to reach the young ones how to read music. We also teach theory on an as-needed basis to our older choirs.

Our latest effort at recruitment for adults is to allow people to come in and participate in the rehearsals just for our spring and fall cantatas. They know that we will start rehearsal with the cantata and that they will be home to care for the children soon. We have picked up new choristers who were afraid we were too big, too good, too professional for them until they got to know us.

For junior high/high school choir -- which sings EVERY week during the school year -- part of the privilege of going on choir tour is a stated percentage of attendance at rehearsals and at church. The students set these standards many years ago. This is a double whammy because rehearsal is Sunday evening, so if they are gone for the weekend, they miss both rehearsal and church. We keep them apprised of

their percentage status so it can be fixed. We make allowances if the chorister is required to be out of town with the non-custodial parent. We make opportunities for service projects to make up absences. Other criteria for going on choir tour include maturity and participation in fund raising events (but not raising a certain dollar amount).

Laura D.

3

I'll relate my experience with a small church (75-80 worship attendance) a few years ago. I led a group singing time (10 minutes) at the beginning of the Sunday School time period, but there was no formal children's choir, and at first I had no luck starting one. But then I discovered that short-term children's musicals worked well. We started with an easy Christmas musical, with rehearsals on three Saturday mornings in December (I marketed it to parents as a great kid-free time to do shopping or gift-wrapping). The kids loved it and discovered that singing together was fun.

Then I started doing a larger children's musical in the spring. I started with a kick-off party on a weekday afternoon after school to generate excitement. There was no obligation to do the musical if you attended the party, but those who chose to do so were required to sign a covenant pledging not to miss more than two rehearsals (out of a total of about 12). We had weekly after-school rehearsals on Thursday afternoons. With parental permission, I walked to the elementary school nearest the church, collected about 6 or 8 children, and walked them back to the church as a group. I used adult volunteers (these changed week-to-week, and I signed them up ahead of time) and donated snacks from UMW so that kids could "hang out" and snack until all the schools (three elementary and the middle school) had released their kids and everyone was there.

Once everyone was there, we started rehearsal, which was divided into several segments to keep their interest over the 90 minutes. We ranged from 2nd to 8th grade, but it worked because I used adult volunteers to help the younger ones find their place, make transitions, and stay focused. The last year I did it I had about 2 dozen kids, about half of whom were not directly connected with the church.

I also charged each participant--it was either \$10 or \$15, with a discount for multiple-child families. Although the money did help cover the expense of purchasing the books for the musical, the real benefit was that families tend to be more committed to (and place more value on) an experience that costs money up front. We also let it be known that scholarships were available, but I only recall one family asking for financial assistance (and we just waived the fee for that family).

I believe that if I'd called it "children's choir," it would never have worked. The key was short-term commitment (about 3 months), the excitement of the theatre aspect (costumes, props, a fun story, etc.), and providing lots of variety at each rehearsal. They ended up learning a LOT about singing together, but they didn't realize they were actually having a choral experience!

Laura B.

4

What have you done for recruitment?

We are a mid-sized church and concentrate on our email blasts to let parents know that we are having choir. We promote it locally by submitting photos to the local newspaper and promote it on our website.

Karin T.

5

Our Children's Choir is not an actual choir but all the children of our Sunday School who wish to sing in a worship setting. The rehearsals are held at the end of Sunday School before our 10:30 worship service. They sing on the second Sunday of the month. We also have a Christmas Musical Program in December and a Children's Day Musical in June. These require extra rehearsals on Saturdays.

This has worked well plus it encourages the children to stay connected as they move up in grades to the Youth Choir.

Jean Anderson

Charlton City United Methodist Church

6

By children's choirs, I'm assuming you are referring to early elementary. We have a God's Kids night on Mondays. The children have dinner (prepared by a committee) at 6:00, have lesson, crafts, games, and music when something is being planned special. I just don't have the time to do it on a regular basis, so at times like Christmas, etc. I'll practice with them for 3 or 4 weeks prior to the event. This happens about 3 times a year. The children range in age from 3 to 10 and are divided into 2 age groups. Each practices 20 minutes.

As the children get older, they want to ring in handbells. About every 3-4 years, I begin a new group of older elementary kids, and we

practice after school for 45 minutes. The Jr/Sr High bell choir has practiced at 8:30 on Sunday morning for years. When they get that old, early Sunday morning is the only time we can find. We practice for an hour, and the kids are very reliable about making it. I think it's because these youth really want to be in the bell choir. Those who choose to be on traveling sports teams simply can't be in bells. Around concert time of special times, we'll schedule extra practices before school (usually 6:30 in the morning) or later at night (usually 9:00).

As for recruitment - I don't do it. My approach has always been - with adults as well as the kids - that if there's enough interest from any group to form a choir, I'll find the time for them. But, I'm not going to try to talk anyone into being part of the program. Over the years that's worked very successfully in our church. The youth/children who really want to be a part of a choir will talk to their friends and do their own recruiting. I hardly ever have been the one to seek out new ringers/singers.

Marilyn H.

7

Direct mailings, personal calls, personal invitation, handwritten notes of invitation, conversations with parents. I choose a fun theme for the recruitment and do something very kid friendly, wild and crazy with it. Working with VBS is one of my best recruiting tools. The kids see Miss Debi in a whole new way during that experience. I also have a very supportive Dir. of Christian Education and Pastor who encourage the kids to participate too! The SS teachers also really encourage the kids to participate. Lots of support in the church.

Rev. Debra T.

8

On Wednesdays our church has a meal at 5:30 and activities for children and adults at 6:30, so I have children's choir from 4:45-5:30 before the meal. Children's choir does singing and handbells or chimes depending on ages. Chimes and bells help with recruitment.

Tricia C.

9

Our Children's and Youth Choirs are all part of our Wednesday evening LOGOS program which includes Bible Study, Worship Skills, Recreation, and a Fellowship Dinner. Pre-school through 5th grade are here from 4:30 PM to 7:35 PM, and Middle School-High School program runs from 5:15-8:20 PM. This year the LOGOS "semesters" are Sept. 24 through December 10 every Wednesday except Nov. 26., and January 7 through April 1 every Wednesday, except Feb. 18(winter vacation). There is a fee of \$110 per child per year or \$55 per semester (covers the meals, materials, music, LOGOS trainings for paid and volunteer staff, etc.) We generally find that if people pay \$110 they will make sure their children are there every week! LOUMC started the program 5 years ago with about 35 kids, this year we have more than 120 enrolled. This is in addition to Sunday School and UMYF on Sunday mornings (120 in preschool and elementary Sunday School and 66 in middle and high school, until we get our new addition finished, then the fire department will permit us to have 300-400 in these programs so we will have room for growth for the first time since 1995).

Because of sports and marching band programs you will notice that we do not start until the last week in September and end before Easter this year. When Easter is in March we have 2 weeks after Spring vacation. But no part of the program ever goes into May. Also some of the middle and high school youth only participate in the winter semester.

The LOGOS program includes Preschool-1st Grade, 2-3 grade, and 4-5 grade singing choirs, 4-5 grade handchime choir(same time as singing, so they must choose), middle school handbell, and high school handbell choirs.

Recruiting for LOGOS is low key(or we would have too many for the facility) mostly through Vacation Bible School(\$20 fee, morning session(120 fire department limit) sells out in 2 or 3 days in April, evening session during same week runs about 60). All bible school and LOGOS teachers and kids get T-shirts which include the church's name for about any excuse, the steeple(lighted at night) can be seen all over town and across the lake. Lots of word of mouth to kids at school, neighbors, etc. We use articles in the church's bi weekly newsletter and our website.

John P.

10

We moved our children's choir to Wednesday night this fall, mainly to try the new time and it was also a time that was good for the volunteer directors. We added a snack supper between the children's handbell rehearsal and the children's singing choir. The singers are in grades 1-5 and we attracted some children with the new time. We also lost a few that liked the Sunday time slot better. Overall, this was a good move for us. Our pre-school choir meets after children's time on Sunday mornings at our 11:00 service. These are children that are usually taken to the nursery. This was a gold mine for us and a great thing for the volunteers. They meet for about 30 minutes and have the bonus of nursery workers to help with crowd control. We use the Musikgarten sacred curriculum for this choir and love it. Recruitment is

done in the fall with choirs of all ages with announcements, newspaper, online registration and registration in the narthex. The directors of each choir also send postcards to all eligible families. Our numbers aren't huge but we have a good percentage of the children available in our congregation.

Rev. Debbie C.

11

What have you done for recruitment?

Children's and Congregational newsletters, flyers home with the S.S. kids.

Actually having the kids that come to "Kid's Praise" (as we call it) go into the narthex and try to get another friend to come in with them.

Bonnie F.

12

The three younger choirs sing in church once a month, and the two youngest ones do a Christmas Concert and a Spring Concert. The high school choir sings in one of our morning services every week and goes on a summer tour every summer.

What have you done for recruitment?

We advertise in the church newsletter, in worship, and twice a year through direct mailings to all in the church database who have children of the appropriate age.

With our high school choir, word of mouth and friends bringing friends is our most effective recruiting tool.

Dirk D.

13

We have done fun activities to gain the children's interest, including skate parties, dance parties, and the Christmas musical, which always fosters their excitement. However, the critical aspect is our entire church's emphasis on participation in volunteer ministry. While this concept is not easily imparted on young children, it has become our mission to engage all the church membership, from the youngest (largely through their parents, naturally) to the oldest. One important part of that is trying to schedule activities for all age ranges to take place at the same time, to lessen a little of the "everyone has to be somewhere at a different time" dilemma, and to give the parents a chance to engage in some spiritual growth activity as well.

Rob M.

14

What have you done for recruitment?

We distribute information about choirs during Sunday school classes and Children's Worship in the fall and publish the schedule in our weekly Connection magazine. The children's choirs sing in church at least monthly from October - May.

Terri C.

15

Having recently left the parish after 35 years my most recent pattern for Children and Youth Choirs in a down town inner city area was to rehearse at 9:00 a.m. Sunday mornings before Sunday School. Recruiting was done significantly at our annual residential music camp.

James J.

16

Our children's choir is directed by a volunteer; they have excellent attendance because they meet between our first and second service before Sunday school starts. Parents will usually get them there then since it's right before Sunday school. She also integrates a lot of hand bell playing which the kids seem to love.

David H.

17

Children's Choirs

I have space in my program for three "kids" choirs. (Angel, Chapel, Youth) Not every year fills those spaces, but I have only played around with the junior/middle school-high school group with scheduling. Originally they met on Thurs at 6:15. Then came ski club, etc. They were moved to Sunday right after the second service (around noon). That worked for quite a long time until I essentially ran out of kids. Last year I had 2 younger (read: middle school) kids for that choir. They were moving up from the elementary group which has ALWAYS (50 years) met on Thurs at 4 pm. We decided to stay at that hour and change the name and robes! This year basketball interfered so we got creative before Christmas, and have met at the Sunday noon time for a few weeks. They are anxious to go back to Thurs. as soon as BB is over.

The Angel Choir (age 4-3rd grade) has been on Friday at 4 pm for about 50 years. (I have been here 35). Although sometimes the kids are tired, they still manage to learn their stuff in the hour that I have them. I expect each of these choirs to sing in church once a month, but we sometimes have to "fudge" it if there will be too many absent. They sometimes do more at holiday time. I send notes home pretty regularly and talk to the parents if needed. They only sing for the second service. The dance problem, believe it or not, usually comes once or twice a year - when they have pictures ON SUNDAY with an iron-clad schedule!!! Also, sometimes the recitals interfere with an extra rehearsal when I am doing a play.

Not a kid comes into the church but what I try to find out where they go to school, grade, etc. I usually ask the current choir members to talk it up to the new ones, even at school. I arrange transportation (usually me) if necessary. I speak with parents, and talk about the many things that the previous kids have accomplished partly as a result of regular choir attendance: being comfortable in front of an audience, performance and audience manners, using the "other" part of the brain, being able to listen well, singing in tune!, having the most welcoming audience for any performance - alone or with a group, understanding of the texts with Bible connections, understanding the real reason for the holidays, sharing, being in a play - responsible for a part, appropriate behavior in church, following the service, and praying even for snacks. There are a number of kids who have gone on in music, thanks partly to the opportunities they had from church...one to New England Conservatory, then Julliard, one in Shenandoah, one in Baldwin Wallace, two to SUNY Potsdam to become music teachers, all of which did their share of solos, and the choir stuff for all their school years. There are some kids who can't handle the commitment of the every week schedule, but I suspect that it isn't totally the kids' problem.

I was amused at Christmas Eve service when a couple of college age kids came to me and mentioned that the little kids didn't seem to know the verses very well and that -just like when they were in it- I had to sing the verses and the kids chimed in on the refrain. We had had two weeks of snow days right after Thanksgiving and even though I had sent the music home, it just wasn't the same. We do what we have to do!! I started out as a music teacher with those years of teaching in all three levels. That helps keep a program working. If directors need help with that sort of thing, there are plenty of helps available, and most teachers are helpful in finding materials and giving suggestions. I make sure that the schedule is in the bulletin every week. I write an article for the newsletter almost every month (even though it often seems like the same article) with upcoming events and encouragement of new members (not just kids). I have the kids sing with the adults sometimes. They all love that. Keeping it out front helps, and being there to help Sunday School teachers also helps. Even though the program isn't that large in numbers, it is fairly strong in consistency and substance.

Carolyn B.

18

We have a program on Wednesday nights called "WWJD" - Wendesdays With Jesus Dudes! It runs from 5:00pm - 7:30pm. We start off with the older kids (4-7 grades) and do puppets and the younger group (K-3) go to the church library and either watch a video, play games or do some kind of structured busy work. At 5:30 both groups come together for a light meal. At 6:00 both groups then go to choir (combined) for 45 minutes. At 6:45 the kids then go to either a craft/hands on experience, or a story telling time (biblically related), or some church related activity such as making valentines for shut-ins, etc. At 7:30 the children are picked up by their parents. We do not run this program continuously from September thru May, we usually start in the second week of September and go 10 weeks or so up to Thanksgiving and end the main part of the program. The kids choir then comes back for about three more weeks until we put on their Christmas musical usually the 2nd or 3rd Sunday in December. We break for Christmas and then start up about the 2nd weeks of January and go 8 weeks, then off 2 weeks, then go another 8 weeks and end right before the spring musical the 2nd Sunday in May. After this program the kids are done till next September. This seems to help the attendance as the kids are not coming continuously for nine months straight.

We have had to do very little for recruitment. This has been so successful for us that the kids themselves have invited their friends from school and neighbors who are not members of the church to come because they have so much fun! We have 14-20 each week and it continues to grow. Each year we usually get 3-5 more kids than the previous year. As younger children in our congregation reach kindergarten, then they start coming and pretty much stay with the program thru 7th grade at which time they move to the youth group.

We vary the 5:00 older kids activity throughout the year to include choirchimes, and keyboard. The combined kids choir puts on two musicals every year one at Christmas and another in early May for what we call "Children's Sunday". In this service the kids pretty much do everything: usher, take up the offering, read scripture, read prayer concern cards etc. The musical on this day ins in leu of the sermon. (The minster loves having a Sunday off where he can sit with the congregation)

Mark T.

19

We have to work very hard to sell commitment to our choirs. We are going to try giving prizes to those kids who exhibit mastery of the songs, who watch the conductor and then, just a general door prize.

We have found Wed. evening right after the church supper to be the best time for the children's choir. At the same time the adults usually have a presentation of some sort that they attend.

Rhonda S.

20

Not directly related to children's choirs, but perhaps helpful: One energetic woman took it upon herself to engage children (ages 5 or 6 to 10) in Sunday morning services by inviting them (after getting parental consent to be supportive) to be greeters, ushers and acolytes. She is very strict in their training--kids must sign up, go through a period of observing older peers, wait their turn serving alongside a child "more experienced", before being considered fully prepared to serve in these capacities. Yes, they hand out bulletins and collect the offering and take their responsibility very seriously. Setting up this program initially took numerous short sessions, scheduled on Sunday mornings. Now the kids pretty much "grow into" the routine. The success of this program centers solely on the loving, patient but very firm woman who is a task master for details and lets each child know she expects nothing but their best. They respond accordingly. Not having any weekday rehearsal time keeps it an attractive option for families.

Nancy T.

21

Recruiting is done on several levels. I send out an invitation to every child, Kindergarten through 5th grade, that is on our data base. Announcements with start up dates are put in the bulletin and the website. We also encourage the kids to bring friends. Anyone who brings a friend gets a "prize." The children's music ministry has become a significant port of entry for un-churched families.

Marilyn B.

22

What have you done for recruitment?

We send letters, make phone calls and try to make the choir quite visible through regular participation in worship. I can now e-mail most of our families, which is wonderful after years of sending home reminders. Currently trying to keep that e-mail list current and finding out who checks their e-mail on a regular basis. We sing once a month and present a special Sunday night worship/program in December and we lead the entire worship service the first Sunday of May. Sometimes the May service is a musical sometimes it is a compilation of music, scripture, poetry etc. Last year, since we had a large group of 5th grade boys, we presented Mark Patterson's "Elijah." This year in May we will be presenting the story of Ruth. The coordinator of our Sunday morning Christian Education program is very cooperative and includes a study for a month of what we are presenting. The children just completed a study of Ruth.

I think the big recruitment for all choirs is that the folks in charge have high expectations musically and the recruitment takes care of itself. In our community, very few churches offer a real children's choir program. Most sing some songs, but do not commit to an every week, quality music, vocal training, type of agenda. It is also important the children not be relegated to services that no one else wants to do. Our children lead worship at the 10:45 time. They lead worship; they do not entertain. Children know when they have done well and offered their best to God. If that is done consistently, faithfulness and good attendance follows.

Mary K.

23

Both of our children's choirs meet after worship on Sunday. Parent volunteers feed them a light lunch, and then we have rehearsal. There aren't too many activities in their lives that conflict with Sunday afternoon rehearsals. It is a great system because no one has to make an extra trip.

I haven't done anything for recruitment; the "new" time (started a few years ago) and bulletin announcements have been enough.

24

Cherub Choir (ages 4-7) meets from 3:30 - 4:00 after school on Thursdays. The school is close to the church so the older children walk the younger ones over. Some of the kids go to different schools and their parents bring them.

The Gitchie Gumees Singers (ages 8-12) meet from 4:00 to 4:45 on Thursdays. We have our library room set up for their homework between 3:30 and 4:00.

They both sing the 3rd Sunday of each month at both the 9:30 and 11:00 services - at 'children's time' in the first service followed by Communion with their families and as the introit in the second service so they can leave. This took some educating of parents that the kids couldn't leave until after they sing at the second service. We give the parents coffee etc and they chat until the kids are through.

We have healthy snacks. (The cookies etc make them way too wild and they can't sit still) Snacks seem to be very important because they are all 'starved'. Sometimes it is hard for them to sit when they have been sitting all day. We play some physical song games and rhythm games to get the wiggles out.

I try to have them sing songs they like. I take popular songs that they may have heard (It's a Wonderful World and It's a Small World etc). We do quite a bit of talking about what the songs mean and how they relate to us as people today. Usually these are songs that their parents might know. That makes a difference also because they practice at home with their parents.

We raised money for robes. They are 'just like' the adult choir's. (Oriental Traders has some for \$10 each - the quality may be lacking but the price is right) It was/is important that the kids have input as to what the robes look like because if they don't like them they won't come) They think they are hot stuff when they wear them. It makes the kids into a unit. They feel more connected with each other and act more mature while they wear them. The older kids chose their name. Gitchie Gumees means big lake. We also have many native Americans in our area so it fit.

All the kids know that they are being groomed for the adult choir. We talk about singing techniques etc. We have rules and the kids follow them. I don't have to say anything because their peers remind them. I also try to send Birthday cards, Valentine's etc

JoEllen E.

25

Our children's choir, grades 1-6, meets every Sunday after the 11am service. At 12:15 the children have a snack (we used to do lunch but now we offer cheese, fruit, crackers, etc.) prepared by parents who stay to organize that. The rehearsal is 12:30-1:30. After that they have a cookie or a small sweet snack before they leave. It seems to be working well.

We haven't done any recruiting other than going around to the Sunday school classes to distribute an invitation or flyer. A couple of times during the year we plan a joint choir anthem with the adult worship choir and the children's choir. It is always wonderful. We did "Night of Silence" this past December. The children sang Silent Night while we adults did the 4-part harmony version.

Bev M.

26

What have you done for recruitment?

We started the year in September with a choir-only "make your own ice cream sundae party" for all children. The evening started with introductions, singing games, and silly songs. We talked about our plans for the year including all the planned activities and two musicals (call us crazy!) We had rhythm instruments and many hand and African drums for children to experience, along with choir chimes. This was a huge success - we were hoping for 20 children and 45 came that first night. Attendance has continued to maintain and both the fall and Christmas Eve musicals were very well-received. We welcome new children throughout the year, so new kiddos continue to join.

Tom T.

27

I have car pools set up to go to schools and day care centers to pick up children for choir. We have two choirs, Cherub, ages 4 through 1st grade and Wesley, ages 2nd through 8th grade, that meet on Monday afternoon from 4:15 to 5:15, so most working parents can get to the church to pick up a chorister after choir if we get them to the church after school.

Texas Conference has a week long choir clinic (camp) at Lakeview Methodist Conference Center near Palestine, Texas. The children love to attend, and they can receive a full scholarship from the church to do so, if they are a member of the choir. A musical is presented each year to help raise money for scholarships, and the children love to participate in a musical.

We also offer a class for children 0 to 3 years called Song Play. It uses the methods of the Richards Institute and Education Through Music, which is taught in the Houston area by Randy McChesney. We have something in that Monday time slot for all children through the eighth grade.

Joyce E.

28

What have you done for recruitment?

Our recruitment procedures generally fall into communication through mail, e-mail, and newsletter. We also ask our Sunday School teachers to encourage the students to participate in mid-week events. Occasionally, we do have special parties on the evening of our rehearsals to thank the children for being a part of the program. This year we are adding a musical hoping to inspire more children to be involved.

Jeremy B.

29

We schedule our children to practice on Sunday morning at 9:00 (second service begins at 9:45 with Sunday school beginning during the second service around 10:00, after the children's message). We have two choirs Cherub Choir (K-2nd grade) and Blue Angels (3-6 grades). It is easier to get the children to come a little earlier on Sunday mornings than it is to try and get them there on a weeknight. They practice every week and each group sings once a month.

Kristin W.

30

For the last two years we have put on a Christmas musical with the children and both years were well attended with about 200 people. As far as recruitment, we always start the year in September with a pizza party practice and that works pretty well. I require the starting age to be in kindergarten but this year I took "rising" kindergartners after Christmas. Right now we have about 20 children. I also purchased the boomwhackers as a way to entice the children and reward them from time to time to play with the boomwhackers.

Ginny S.

31

We do not have a regular children's choir. However, we do have the children sing for some special worship services. In those cases, we schedule the rehearsals in consultation with the Sunday school teachers and take a few minutes from the Sunday school time for several weeks before the special services to hold rehearsals for the children. The teachers have been asked in advance, and they include the short rehearsals in their plans.

Judith M.

32

Our Junior Choir is for grades 3-8. It has met on Wednesday afternoons since forever!, so folks know going in that Jr. Choir meets on Wed. from 4:15-5:15. The choir meets from Sept. through April....too many conflicts with end of year school stuff in May. They sing about every 6 weeks, when they sing they sing both an anthem and an offertory. They also sing on Christmas Eve and for the Easter Vigil service. The singing schedule is decided in September and sent home, so folks know from the beginning of the year which Sundays the choir will sing. They do a musical the last Sunday in April. Major conflict is with the Intermediate School musical which is in March, but the music teacher is a friend of mine, she sends me her rehearsal schedule far in advance and I work around it.

What have you done for recruitment?

Because the choir sings often, most of our youth look forward to being old enough to sing, so not much recruitment is needed. Last year we did start a primary choir, which rehearses on Sunday mornings before Church School. They sing about every 6 - 8 weeks ... always an introtit ... so they can sing, then sit with their parents. It gets them into seeing themselves as choir members, so it's even easier for them to start in the Jr. Choir in 3rd grade.

Sally C.

33

Our church plans what we call "Wonderful Wednesdays" where the children's choir meets from 5:30 - 6:00 pm and then everyone eats together in our Fellowship Hall. At 6:25 pm our children go to "The Promised Land" workshops to hear Bible stories in the tent, get snacks in "Mary and Margaret's kitchen" and finish around 7:15pm. The adults have a 30 -45 min. program at the same time the children do, and then we have Adult Choir Practice, Praise Band, etc., around 7:00 pm.

This works very well for us and we usually have a very good turnout. We have tried doing things on other days of the week, but found we can't compete with all the activities families have now. We have determined that when whole family is involved, we have great success.

Word of mouth has been our best bet along with putting info in the bulletin and newsletters.
Lisa T.

34

Recruitment doesn't work and can't compete with soccer here. The only thing we have been able to do, is one of our parents at Christmas takes the initiative for a children's program. She asks all the parents or grandparents to pick a Bible reading, poem or song. We usually get one instrumental and one piano solo, one Bible reading, a few recitations. Then she has them all sing something together. It makes it a lot easier, the kids come prepared, and she only has 3-4 rehearsals. This year they all wore Santa hats and made it into the local paper.

I think the key is getting the parents/grandparents involved and having the kids coming prepared.

Janet H.

35

There has been a concerted effort to be more inviting to children by the staff. One of my priorities was to reach the children as soon as possible. The Sunday school time was out of the question because it happened at the same time as church, which didn't allow me to lead it. I began with a Children's Choir on Wednesday evenings 1/2 hour before the adult choir. Immediately, I incorporated the choir into participating during worship. This was very new to the community as well as to the children.

The next year, Wednesday evenings were firmly established as "church night" with meals and several other opportunities. I continued with the Children's Choir and attempted to teach the preschoolers after church and Sunday school for 10 minutes. This was sort of hit or miss. This past year, the Cherub Choir is also meeting for 1/2 hour, before the meal is served. This has allowed more music learning and building interest for the Children's Choir when they are of age. It took my participation in the summer VBS following my first year to get me introduced to the children of the congregation in any sort of way.

The main thing is that the Wednesday night program has been endorsed by the whole staff and the community of the congregation. I personally do not have attendance expectations. I do have high musical expectations. I have flexed their worship leadership by when children are around and when they are ready to perform their music. The music I choose varies from longer anthems with instruments to short sung sentences for portions of the liturgy.

New also this year is the Instrumental Choir. During the Children's Choir time on the second Wednesday of the month, I provide an all instrumental rehearsal for those who would never sing. We work with percussion, Orff and chimes. This has increased the musical leadership by children in worship by two fold over last year.

To recap the above by recruitment:

- Taught VBS so that the children knew me and the music I would teach
- Started introducing children's musical leadership in worship immediately
- Had children's choir do an anthem in 2006 with adult choir
- Worked with staff to establish Wednesday "church night" so parents and kids had things to do
- Began a 1-6 grade choir 2006
- started with preschool and kindergarten after worship 2007 then added them to the Wednesday line-up
- Create as many opportunities for the Children's Choir and Cherub Choir to be worship leaders

Cynthia P.

36

I have found that incorporating the rehearsal time for children around our Wednesday night family program, knowing dinner would be available following, gave parents a boost in having the kids there for choir. It is an early enough time-slot, so ending time still gave time for homework and almost the usual bedtime.

Lorraine M.

37

From 6-8:00 p.m. every Wednesday our Children's Ministry Team supports a collage of Children's ministry opportunities. As you will see on our Website, which is one avenue to recruiting beyond our Church, we offer Children's Choir, Bell Choir, and Beginning Musicianship opportunities. Liturgical Dance and Recreation is also a part of the options our families have to choose from. By offering excellent opportunities in a safe environment, led by creative leaders who have a heart for our children and their specialized area, parents and children alike are drawn to participate. Our families also know that an expectation is that the choirs, whether vocal or bells, will have an opportunity to participate in worship on a regular basis. Our liturgical dance troupes also have opportunities to share in worship and have been an integral part of expressing praise and glory to God.

Concerning how we recruit, I would share the following. Mid-late August, staff invites all small groups ministries, music, worship and arts ministry, puppet ministry, Bible Studies, etc., to be a part of a Ministry Fair. Each ministry of our church is encouraged to set up a booth with flyers, hands on, videos, and sign up sheets promoting their area and inviting others into fellowship with them. There is also a person or two present to speak with inquiring persons about their ministry. The Fellowship Team provides coffee, juice, and donut holes at their table along with their annual activities. This has been very successful for two years now in allowing those who have been in the church forever to see the many growing opportunities that they might consider for their Christian growth and development as Disciples of Jesus Christ. It also is strategically planned at a time of year when we have newly arriving families into the community at large who are looking for a church home. All of our ministries areas have grown and benefited from the Ministry Fair. We continue to evaluate and re-evaluate to maximize effectiveness. We have a great deal of fun implementing the Ministry Fair which runs from 8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Sunday morning around the 24th of August each year.

Caren L.

38

I have sent letters/postcards/emails to all eligible children/families. I send notes through the Sunday school in August. We have a music fair with enrollment for all choirs two Sundays in August. I write an article for the newsletter explaining the benefits of musical training related to other academic subjects. I have also called all the children on the roster who I think might possibly be interested--this is almost a necessity for handbells.

Ellen J.

39

What have you done for recruitment?

As far a recruitment, I have encouraged singers to bring friends who might be interested in singing. We have always had some children from the community who have been a part of our choir program. I have tried summer music camps, but with the school year closing in around us, summer camps and vacations, the turn out is not good. The last time I scheduled a summer music week, I had so few to register, that we ended up not having the camp.

Nancy C.

40

We make our children's choir a part of our after-school Children's Ministry program, which meets on Wednesdays. Because we are part of a two-point charge, our worship hour changes and when we are early (8:30 a.m.) it seems to be harder for parents to get their kids there. But we go with who we have. As far as recruitment goes, we allow whoever wants to sing to do so. No auditions required. We average about 10-12 in our choir.

Michael

41

I have done the choirs for a number (10+ years) and I have recruited in various ways: announcements of invitation in the bulletin and church newsletter, letters to every child in the Sunday School during August and a verbal announcement during announcement time on Sunday.

Karen H.

42

Recruitment has been an issue at times. I open the door to a wide range of ages (My group has some singers, but I have added a considerable number of percussion instruments so that almost any age can participate).

I advertise around the church, and I am just now looking to expand that reach. The group has been running for two years, officially. The second year I expanded it a little and changed the format slightly.

The best thing that I have done that helps get kids through the door is to have a snack/play time for 15-20min. after rehearsal. I get some kids who just come for that and put up with the other stuff.

Michael C.

43

We have scheduled our choirs at 5:30 p.m. on Wed. followed by a pizza dinner which is \$2/wk followed by Pioneer Clubs for 4yr-5th grade and Bible study for Teens. Everything ends promptly at 8:00 p.m. We have approx. 30 children 4 yr-3rd grade and 20 in the 4th - 12th grade choir.

We recruit on Rally Sunday at the end of Aug. and present it as a 2 ½ hour break for parents. Children have to reregister for Pioneer Clubs in January. Also it is one of weekly Powerpoint announcements

Linda R.

44

Recruiting – We do everything we can think of. We do a summer week-long music camp that involves huge number of kids. We do flyers. We go to Sunday school classes and hand out flyers. We go to any children's event we can think of and talk about the children's choirs. If any of this effective? Minimally, but we figure it can't hurt!

Mark Z.

45

What have you done for recruitment?

We have scheduled our rehearsal time to be right before the children and youth have their meetings on Sunday night so we have more than we usually would on any other day.

Renee M.

46

I schedule my children's choir around the Christmas and Easter seasons. We meet for a period of about 5 to 6 weeks. During that time we learn an anthem to be sung during worship as well as sing fun songs, play musical games, and learn something about worship and the seasons of Advent and Lent. Dinner is included in the activity so that parents don't have to rush around after work. We call this activity "Sing With Your Supper." This seems to work well with our families because it doesn't require a long-term commitment.

Linda H.

47

Our children's choir is worked into a family Wednesday night programming. Dinner, Adult Bible Study, Confirmation, Choir and nursery. Something for every age although only 1 option for K-5th - choir. 6:30 - 7:30. I put out the schedule in summer when parents start setting up fall schedule and ask them to keep Wednesday night free.

Donna

48

What have you done for recruitment?

We sent out letters to prospects from VBS and a flyer home with parents of the Preschool program. I also send a letter and a follow-up phone call to new members when they join the church.

Gwyn B.

49

1. Sundae Sunday – choir sign up along with ice cream and various toppings for fixing your own sundae. We do this before Sunday School, after Sunday School, and after late service at church. The parents are there also (hopefully!) and at that point I can give them our tentative schedule for the year.

2. Sign up for choir, go to The Plex for free: The Plex is our local entertainment complex with boats, miniature golf, race cars, video games, etc. When you sign up for choir, you receive a ticket (put together by me) that gets you into the Plex for free on a given date. We all meet there on that date and start choir with a party!

3. Posters and mailings: I do use posters around the church to make parents and others aware of the upcoming choir season. "Serve God – Serve your church" is one of my favorites. I've also made posters that have windows you open to see the answer. The heading on the poster would be "Top Ten Reasons to Join Choir," with the answers hidden until you open the little paper choir folder on the poster. Every child receives a letter asking them to come to choir. I also post on our website and in the church's newsletter so at least they're aware of the opportunity.

4. Involving the parents is extremely important, so I try to utilize them in the above activities as much as possible. I don't use a contract, but I do try to communicate how important it is for choir members to come each week. We do a spring musical, and some of the parts are distributed based on the year's attendance. Sometimes that's what it takes to keep the children coming.

Jeanette S.

50

We rotate electives with the children Gr. 2-5, so that they have 5-6 weeks to experience skills like handbells, creative writing, making sets/props, skits, drama, recorder, dance, and percussion. So if there is a genuine desire to be involved in what is going on for families on Wed. evenings, we believe we have covered the bases in providing opportunities for children with diverse interests to become involved.

What have you done for recruitment?

We have done:

- Come and see Night: allowing children to rotate between all electives and activities (including choir rehearsal) so that parents and children can get a taste;
- Family Fun Night: outside inflatables/games, inside activities to intro our WOW electives
- Weekend retreats for families - to meet and bond with others involved in the program

Eileen S.

51

The children's choirs registration is held in conjunction with all Wednesday evening children's activities, which are very popular in our church. In fact, children's ministries, not part of the music ministries, does all the registration in the late summer for the fall/spring activities. As far as the choirs, we have the best participation when we're presenting a musical. In the past, there was always a Christmas musical, which brought in a large number of children for the fall session. Unfortunately, spring participation was usually about half that of fall, unless another musical was being presented late in the spring. Musicals appear to be very popular with children and adults, who also love helping with the musicals.

Nancy H.

52

We schedule "Mustard Seed" sessions right after school @ 3:30-5 p.m. on Wednesdays for elementary children. Vans pick up the children at their schools and deliver them to church. We have snacks, Bible Study, recreation, crafts, music activities like Vacation Church school is formatted. 42 children come for this.

Then we have a church supper for around 150 people 5-6.

The children who want to sing and ring handbells for worship stay for rehearsal 5:30-6:30. We have 12 children choosing to do that. Some just come for this hour.

It is a long evening for them, but we have the best results getting them there this way.

Gloria W.

53

I direct a Genesis Choir (ages 4-2nd grade) and Joysingers (ages 3rd -6th grade). We meet on Wednesday evenings after Family Table, which is a dinner that we serve with all our families involved in Wed. night activities. The Genesis Choir meets from 6:15 -7:00 at which time they go to the nursery/playroom for the older kids if parents are still involved in church activities. The Joysingers are involved in Bible study called Rock Solid during the 6:15-7:00 time. It is organized by grade level, so each grade level meets separately. Then the Joysingers rehearse from 7:00-8:00. We have snacks at the end of both choirs. Each children's choir sings in church once a month and more during the Christmas and Easter time. Mostly recruiting happens because it has been such a longstanding program and the kids participate in worship, so this always interests new kids, etc. I send out a letter in August to all families registered explaining the program and listing the schedule for singing in church. I also meet with Sunday school kiddos in the fall and continue to stop in and invite any new kids or encourage any kids that aren't involved. I also direct a musical each year and this is a major recruitment and retainment piece, I think!

Julie A.

54

Our church has a children's "choir" which is made up of all Sunday School kids up to third grade. They learn simple songs ("The B-I-B-L-E," "Jesus Loves Me," etc.) as part of their weekly opening exercises with all classes together, then on the Sunday they are singing in church, they rehearse in the sanctuary for about ten minutes. They sing in church about once every six weeks. Not all children sing for the worship service, but they all learn the songs.

Our Youth Choir is made up of ages third grade through high school, for girls and unchanged boys' voices. They meet weekly at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday before Sunday School starts. They learn unison and some two-part anthems written for children's/youth choirs, and sing in church about six times each year. They learn proper vocal technique and emphasis is also placed on the contribution they are making to the worship life of the whole church and how they are honoring God by singing in choir.

As to recruitment, a letter is sent to the parents of eligible children/teens early in September. The director also plans a yearly picnic for the group, as well as frequently bringing little treats such as pencils, bite-size candy, etc. She also treats them to donuts the next Sunday after they have sung in church.

By having rehearsals on Sunday morning, we avoid conflict with sports and other activities. The downside is not being able to do some more difficult music that might otherwise be within reach of the groups. (Our adult choir also rehearses on Sunday morning, during the Sunday school hour).

Linda B.

55

We are just starting a children's choir for the first time. The number of children in our congregation has really grown, so it seemed like a good time. For recruitment so far they have just announced it during church service. The kids have been practicing right after our Sunday worship service while our fellowship hour is still going on. I think they have 8 or 9 so far. That's all I know at this point.

Ann R.

56

What have you done for recruitment?

The boys needed more, so we added a focus on bells & rhythm instruments -- they loved it! We still lose them from 4th grade on up though. We combined rehearsal with a mission program emphasis & snack. They make things for homebound folks, college students goody boxes, posters for UMW events, food cupboard visits, Locks of love donations, get well cards for sick folks, etc. We will be baking communion bread. It gives a renewed purpose for parents and children. It's important to be here.

Reggie A.

57

What have you done for recruitment?

Each group sings monthly and that is almost all of the recruitment we have needed. E-mail reminders to parents, listing in the newsletter

and bulletin and other forms of publicity are helpful.

Gene F.

58

What have you done for recruitment?

Vacation Bible School has been a good recruitment tool for us. When un-churched kids have the opportunity to sing under our children's choir director, "Mr. Will," they fall in love with choir! We also recruit from Sunday school classes.

However, we have many children on our rolls who are not in choir or handbells. We think the main reason is because parents today are not willing to bring their kids back to church on Sunday afternoon.....since it is the only family day some of them have.

Deborah G.

59

What have you done for recruitment?

We have a pre-school here at the church so we advertise to the parents there. We also invite new children to join the choir as they are able. Our program is not big by any means, as we are a downtown church with primarily an older congregation.

Robert J.

60

What have you done for recruitment?

I send out invitations to all the children late in the summer to let them know about our children's choirs. We also usually have some type of "kick off" event on a Wednesday night close to the start of the choirs, where the children can meet their choir teachers and their missions teachers, similar to an "open house" night at school. The teachers give goodies to the children as they leave their classes. We also spend some time in their Sunday school classes to get them excited about the new choir year.

Janice H.

61

We have Wednesday evening suppers during the school year. Then, we offer classes for adults at 7. Our children choirs are held at the same time as the adult classes. We also have child-care programs then.

Tina E.

62

We do our children's choir as part of our Wednesday night activities. We serve a dinner at 6:00, and have children's, youth and adult activities after the meal. The children's choir begins at 6:30, and is followed immediately by what we call KICK Club which is a high energy, experiential, Christian teaching time. The children's choir works as one, while we break the kids into age groups for KICK Club. With the whole family here for an evening's at the church, we don't have to worry about scheduling around competing activities.

Our primary recruiting method is kids inviting other kids. Those who bring friends get rewarded with something called "sandy candy," which we buy by the cartons. The wonderful thing is that when a new child attends, they keep coming! The content and the excitement and support of the adults are the keys to ensuring that kids return. There is a strong emphasis on fun and serious spirituality. The two elements are not mutually exclusive.

Bob I.

63

Several of our youth have sung in all-district choirs through their schools so I decided to try and see if there was any interest [in a church youth choir]. I tested it out in the summer to see if any kids would come. They did! I announced it in the bulletin and sent e-mails to every parent of a middle school or high school youth as well as direct e-mails to every youth whose e-mail I could get hold of. I first tried to do rehearsals before Youth Group on Sunday evenings. However, I found out that many of these young people didn't attend Youth Group. So, at the parents' request, we switched it to right after the second service on Sunday mornings (11:30). This has worked well and I have pretty consistent attendance. Some kids who initially showed interest ended up being too overcommitted to other activities to even make it on

Sunday mornings. But we have settled into a nice group of 8 youth. Four sopranos and four altos (one male alto). Now that we've been singing successfully for several months (and to critical acclaim!), some of the other kids (even some younger) have expressed interest in wanting to be a part of it. I have the youth singing once a month and I featured them with the Adult Choir for our Christmas concert with orchestra. I gave them one piece to solo on with the orchestra and got a great response to that. I've had them sing with the Adult Choir twice and that also gets a good response. So the youth are very excited about all the attention they've gotten and because I use several of them to do solos, they show up because they're afraid to miss out on auditioning for a solo. They love singing everything I give them and will try anything. I love these youth dearly and it has been a great deal of fun working with them.

Mary Anne B.

64

Our biggest form of recruitment is from the individual members of the choirs (bringing friends with them) and worship participation (where the parents get to see their children having a great time). Because we keep their schedule full, interesting, and fun, our choirs tend to recruit for themselves! Our directors are very skilled at picking music that holds their interest. The rotation in the fall allows us to expose them to different kinds of music, too, and helps them develop an appreciation for various forms of musical presentation.

Rev. Jackson H.

65

What have you done for recruitment?

In August, the music department sponsors a bowling party for the children's division - "Back to Choir - Bowling Day." This gives the directors a chance to be with the children on an informal basis. After pizza and cake, each child is given a choir card reminding the children and their parents about the fall choir offerings. Some parents register their children at that time; others register on line.

David R.

66

What have you done for recruitment?

Word of mouth seems to work best, augmented by awareness articles in the newsletters. It helps to have the participants and their parents having a positive feel about the groups. The fun or joy in these groups come from feeling good about a job well done and that speaks volumes!

The love the directors and helpers have for children, music, and the Lord is the strongest recruiter and comes through in their handling of these children and their need to be a vital part of church and music.

Bloyce J.

67

Our children's choir program is on Thursday afternoons after school ... this does leave out some families who work and cannot provide transportation at that time, but within the life of our church this is the best time for us. We run our program in 2 semesters... kids may join for the fall or the spring (or both) ... this allows some families to participate in only fall or only spring when they are not playing sports, etc. If they had to commit to the entire year we would probably lose them.

Jennifer H.

68

Big recruiting in the summer...kids have to register to take part, get T-shirts...parents look at it like another activity. You have to sign up to participate. The year is planned out ahead of time. We talk up the year...kids sing once a month, participate in a children's choir festival, and do a musical in the spring.

Carrie W.

69

What have you done for recruitment?

We have had a "blitz" promo and recruitment Wednesday night "Let's make some noise" which included "faith witnesses" and special

announcements in all 4 morning worship services as well as having registration/information tables in or around our worship venues.
Mark L.

70

What have you done for recruitment?

We compile a list of all children on our church roles who are of choir age, and mail out an engaging invitation to join choir from their Choir Director about a month before choir begins. We also personally call every child on that list and invite them by phone and ask if they have any questions. Then we have 2 weeks of registration in the Sunday school area, and put it on our TV screens and morning announcements.

While the personal phone calls have given us some great results, I think overall the most effective recruitment tool is word of mouth.... If choir is a great place to be, word is going to get around. We also encourage our returning choir kids to invite their friends from school who don't have a church home to come join us! We have received new choir members that way, and sometimes, it eventually leads to new families in our church as well - although that is never pushed when a child joins choir.

Our annual musical in our 4th & 5th grade choir also serves as a recruitment tool – we open it up to our choir members' friends from school as well, and we also present it to the public and advertise it well. I have a boy in my choir this year whose family is at our church because they were invited to a musical 6 years ago to see an older brother's friend in it - and they decided this was the place for them based on that performance. 6 years later, we are doing that same musical, and he is now in it himself! It's so cool how things work out sometimes! :-)

Lori B.

71

We have had to schedule our children and cherub choir rehearsals during our worship service. The children are in the worship service for the opening hymn, call to worship, anthem, and then come forward for the children's sermon. After that, they leave for one of the two choirs or children's church.

Karen M.

72

Currently I have a children's choir of 35 voices.

I meet them on Wednesday afternoons from 3:30-5:30 pm. I place them in a 3-tiered rotation that is divided along age/grade. i.e., K-1, 2nd-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade.

The rotations begin at 4:00 and are scheduled every 30 minutes. The children are divided each year based on numbers within each group. I have volunteers help with the various rotations.

Within each rotation we cover different techniques and skills including, vocal/choral singing, instruments such as recorder, Orff, chimes, and percussion as well as a rotation devoted to rhythmic games and using sign language on the texts that we sing and texts from hymns. I also spend time learning Solfege and other sight-singing techniques.

I base the activities for the rotations on the skill sets of my volunteers which have been consistent over the past couple of years but can change at any time.

I meet the children at 3:30 each Wednesday for snacks and allow them time to get energy out and get comfortable with the other children around them. I find that this helps any new children that join to get involved quickly and have something to do.

The children's choir sings once every six weeks in worship as well as performing some kind of special presentation at Christmas and at the end of the school year, i.e., a musical or special worship service led solely by children.

Quint H.

73

For recruiting, we have put articles in our church newsletter, sent postcards and letters to all of our Sunday School children, called parents and children. The best recruiting comes from the kids themselves. When they're enjoying choir, they invite their friends.

Dr. Marcia Van O.

74

I use the regular types of recruitment: letters to church children, ads in church newsletter, cleverly decorated bulletin boards that are close to the entrance of the church, but so far I have found that getting to know the children that come to our church for VBS and inviting them to join the choir really works best.

Kathy G.

75

Choirs are integrated in program of missions and Bible study, which GREATLY enhances attendance /consistency. Use musicals (which kids and parents are crazy about) ... start advertising the musical just before the "semester," and we're overrun.

Glenn H.

76

Word of mouth is the best tool that I have found. Have the children bring a friend or talk to them and the parents on an individual basis.

Sandy M.

77

Sunday morning rehearsals work well because the parents don't have to make extra time to come to the church, they just start out a bit earlier and have coffee while their kids are rehearsing before the service starts.

The singing schedule is also planned in Sept., as much as we can, so that parents know when their kids will be needed to sing in church. I also get a copy of the schedules for the two local school divisions in late August, so I know when spring break is and when professional days occur. Depending upon the outside interests of the singers, I sometimes ask the singers to use their outside talents at the church. Dance, music lessons are easy to incorporate into our programs and the kids are usually very willing. As for the sports, not so much.

Recruitment: I go into the Sunday school and youth group classes and hand out flyers and talk to the kids. Each late August I send a mailing to all family addresses on our congregational list, describing each of our choral, instrumental and worship arts programs and who to contact with emails and phone numbers, dates and times of rehearsals. I make announcements before the service during September, even after we've had our seasonal opening all-choir anthem. We'll take singers at any time throughout the year in any group, and we occasionally put inviting announcements into the bulletin. Also, at coffee time after the service, we personally invite and try to convince kids and adults that the choir is the 'place to be' and invite them to sit in at a rehearsal. In the spring our church has a breakfast for all those who are graduating and the list of names is placed in the bulletin. These are kids who are graduating from grade six, grade nine, grade twelve and university. With this list, I can approach each one personally and invite them to join the next choir.

Judy G.

78

Our children's choirs are all scheduled on Wednesday afternoon to early evening. Two years ago we built a series of activities for children who don't sing around that schedule. So, while children are in vocal choirs, bell choirs, chimes or boomwhackers, other children can be in groups like puppets, media training, etc. Then there is a meal available for those who want to stay for the evening program, which includes classes for adults, Missions Club and Chess club for the older elementary children, and childcare and activities for the younger children. Rehearsals begin at 4:15, the meal is 5:30-6 and evening classes run 6-7:30, except for Disciple Bible study, which runs till 8:00.

Youth vocal and bell choirs rehearse on Sunday afternoon, followed by a meal and the youth program.

I know we use flyers to recruit for the choirs, as well as bulletin announcements, letters, phone calls, and word of mouth.

Susan L.

79

Recruitment - just keep putting reminders in church newsletter, send emails to parents, talk to parents personally

Patty H.

80

We have gone to a term system this year. We have 4 terms of our midweek children's program which includes choir. The Fall term was 5 weeks, the December term was 3 weeks, the Winter & Spring terms will be 4 weeks. We won't always have the same children due to all of their other activities, but we are able to reach more of them for at least a little bit. They are more willing to sign up for a term than they were for a whole or even half year. The children lead in worship the Sunday after the completion of each term.

We called and wrote every available child and parent. We publicize on our webpage and newsletter. Word of mouth works best.

Robert F.

81

We start our children's choir in the fall - close to around when school starts. We advertise for children ages 1st-6th grade - we place notices in the church newsletters, bulletins, and we also mail postcards through our church membership directory, to Vacation Bible School attendees, Mother's Day Out children, and to our Children's Bible Study kids. From Aug - Dec we work on Christmas music and songs/lines for our Christmas Musical. We sing once a month in our worship services (not always Christmas music - but that is our main focus)...then after our play - we go Christmas Caroling to our church "shut-ins" and nursing home patients. We will take the month of January off and begin again in February. We try to sing once a month in worship services until the end of the school year. We usually make a big day out of Palm Sunday including a breakfast...once summer hits - we take off again - because of too many schedule conflicts with vacations and activities - but once again we encourage Vacation Bible School and other "kid friendly" events as they arise - game night, bar-b-ques, ice cream socials, etc.

I think it would be fun to make a music video too - we'll see, anyway.

Kimi W.

82

For recruiting, we put announcements in the bulletin. We have an email announcement that goes out each week with church news and I will put something about children's choir at the start of each semester. Our children's department also sends out a monthly email newsletter about children's activities and I try to be included in that.

I have occasionally done a color flier that I have mailed to everyone on the church database, but that is very expensive and I'm not sure it does anymore to recruit than the free emails. We will also hand out a flier in Sunday school at the beginning of each semester.

My key piece of advice in all of these is to remember that with children's choir, you are selling your program mainly to the parents, not the kids. The parents are the ones that are going to have to drive them to rehearsal each week. I always emphasize the biblical lessons that we will be learning through music and drive home that kids will remember things they learned in song much longer than they recall a Sunday school lesson or memory passage.

Jenny N.

83

We have two children's choirs - Cherub and Carol plus the Chime Choir. We attempt to schedule these at least once a month in addition to special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, etc. We work with the directors of each group to keep "on-top" of the various schedule competitions that go on with our children. It is a constant communications issue. We have special emphases months, utilize the newsletter and website, and distribute various flyers to families, visitors, etc.

Pat K.

84

What have you done for recruitment?

We send out post cards for a summer Choir Camp, put up posters, talk to kids in Religious Ed. classes and at social hour, encourage members to bring a friend, have a ministry fair sign up table for musicians which includes the children.

Donna K.

85

Communicate with the families as much as possible and in as many ways as possible. I give them our schedule at the beginning of each semester and ask that they give me their child's schedule. They are often willing to negotiate with coaches and dance instructors. If (when) someone drops out for a semester or a six week period [for sports], be sure that they know that the door is always open and that they are always welcome back. Keep sending your newsletters to the parents. Don't let them forget you!!!

Recruitment

1. My biggest single recruiting event is a summer "Worship Arts Camp." We meet at the church Monday - Friday from 9:00 am - noon, during the first full week of August. We sing in large and small groups and have other classes such as Music Games, Arts and Crafts, Sign Language, Dance, Recorder, etc. On Thursday afternoon we go rollerskating. On Friday we have a luncheon program for the families. I usually gain several new members after this week.
2. I am always visible to the children and their parents. I volunteer to help with Sunday School, I alternate with the Children's Director for children's sermons, I help with special events in the children's ministry. A very large percentage of our Sunday School attenders also sing in the choir.
3. I send brochures out to every child enrolled in Sunday school twice a year, inviting them to join choir. I also put notices in the newsletter and the children's department newsletter periodically, reminding parents that their child can join the choir at any time. When we sing for church or a special program, I put a line in the bulletin and/or have the pastor announce that we are always accepting new members.
4. It never stops. I have directed this program for 25 years and it is well established, but I still keep up the recruiting! The families have so many options that I have to keep my ministry in front of them!

Venita MacG.

86

Our best recruitment tool is keeping up expectations that children's choir is the place to be and being VERY VISIBLE. The Carol Choir sings regularly in worship (3 or 4 times a semester) and performs two full-scale musicals each year - Christmas and spring. They have overnight lock-ins twice a year with trips to Laser Quest, bowling or the like and overnight sleep and movies in the Sanctuary!! They also try to perform off-campus at least once each semester. The Cherub Choir, because of age, is not involved in the outside activities but they generally sing in worship whenever the Carol Choir sings. The Carol Choir sings at both the traditional and the contemporary services. We try to make all of our ensembles attractive and desirable while keeping them spiritually enriching and useful in the overall mission of the church.

All in all, our program is successful because everything is coordinated with everything else and the Wednesday night schedule is sort of a one-stop shopping trip. The Ministry of Music and Worship Arts works closely with the other program areas (particularly Children and Youth) to keep from stepping on one another's toes. Ok, that's about it.

Elvin N.

87

Children walk across the street (with Children's Ministry Director) from the elementary school to our church on Wednesday afternoons. They attend 3 sessions that include an Academy session (choosing to just do homework, learn a new skill or be in an interest group), to Bible study and then to choir. Some children come only to choir--a few even come from other churches that do not have children's choirs.

What have you done for recruitment?

Our recruitment is done through our church newsletter and simply word of mouth. We publicize special programs like musicals, but it is not a priority.

Dr. Susie D.

88

What have you done for recruitment?

I am not the director of this group; however, I can tell you that the director has found that personal conversation with children and their parents is the best way to bring new voices into the group. We have at least 20 more adults attending worship on the Sundays the children participate in our worship celebration.

Barry C.

89

All of the groups rehearse on Sunday afternoons. The rehearsal times are placed in coordination with the times for our two youth groups. This schedule allows the parents to make fewer trip back and forth, except for the families who have children in both age groups.

All of the groups lead worship twice monthly, doing the same anthem at the 8:15 AM service one week and the 10:45 AM service the next. I encourage the groups to perform for community events, so that others from outside the church can appreciate their talents.

I subscribe to a music service that allows me to make rehearsal CDs for my singers, which I do periodically throughout the singing year (September to May). The children can take their music home and listen to the CDs to rehearse throughout the week. This is especially helpful for the parents of the younger children who frequently end up knowing the songs as well as the children!

Finally, we make time for fun. We have an end-of-the-year party or outing (teens and children separately) once school is out for summer. Over the years, we have had swim parties at homes or at public parks, miniature golf parties, trips to the zoo, the Science Center and Children's Museum, and have spent the at an amusement park and at a water park. The hardest thing is deciding where each group wants to go.

At Christmastime, the entire fine arts department (I also direct the adult Chancel Choir, an adult handbell choir, a drama team, a dance team and a band) gathers for a combined Christmas party, complete with food, games and (of course) presents!

These choirs have taken many years to build. I first started the elementary choir, building from music experiences I had with the children in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Once these children got older, they wanted to keep singing, so the teen group was started. I was able to target some of the more out-going, musically gifted children; these children and youth were able to draw others to the choir. That, I think, is the key. You have to make the youth of all ages feel that they are LUCKY to be able to be in the choir - that is where the leaders are.

Dianne R.

90

1. Currently they meet twice a month for about half an hour during the 8:45 am Sunday worship service. These are children younger than 4th grade.

We do not recruit too much as just about everyone in the age group just goes to the rehearsal at the point indicated during the service.

Dennis D.

91

We had an "open House" evening in the fall where we played games ... around singing themes at Halloween ... sort of a combination of "trick or treat" and "name that tune" ... and we did gain two new members! We are planning another open event for Valentine's Day and have invited all the elementary children to join us.

We use a variety of materials, including chimes, handbells and Boomwackers to provide an opportunity to make music and introduce musical skills in other formats.

We put an article/ad in every monthly newsletter so we try to keep the enrollment continually open to children.

In order to compete, I feel there has to be some element of "fun" in the children's choir program. The past several years we have had an extended time with snacks, games, instruments and singing and this worked well and I think it was appealing to some boys who aren't interested in just singing. However, we have shortened it to focus on singing with our change of time and I miss the longer sessions and so do the kids! On a personal note, we spend time in a circle each week just sharing for a few minutes and I feel this bond is important in a church setting.

I felt one of our best recruitment tools was VBS when it was scheduled in August. We had a lot of children excited about singing and we sent letters to the families and there definitely was carry-over for both children's choir and Sunday school. Unfortunately, the leaders of VBS had chosen dates earlier in the summer the past two years.

We have tried sending home notes with the Sunday school classes and sending letters in the mail in the fall. I truly believe at this point we get our best response from watching the congregation and personally greeting the children and parents and inviting them to choir.

Ellen P.

92

What have you done for recruitment?

Personal phone calls to families. Talking to parents and children at church. Repeated invitations in the monthly Messenger. I've pondered extending invitations to other United Methodist churches, but haven't figured out the logistics (when to sing at each church, without requiring the children to sing every single Sunday but still hitting each church once a month).

Sara C.

93

I recruit by "attacking" parents, visiting Sunday school and sending letters in September. Sometimes they just come, but not very often.

Shirley R.

94

For recruitment, in the Fall we hold a registration hour on a Sunday afternoon. Parents fill out forms, and printed event calendars with pictures of activities for children are distributed.

Jane K.

95

We schedule choir immediately following school on Wednesday afternoon for grades K-6. Car-pools are coordinated from the 10 schools. Choir for 4 year olds is scheduled during the day immediately after our church pre-school.

Recruitment - Attractive brochure is mailed to all children, newsletter invitation, nothing particularly innovative! The children sing regularly in our worship services to encourage participation.

Beverly C.

96

Plan a four-day choir camp, away from the church where the children live and work together before starting the new choir year. You can look for church camps available or small college campuses that are not terribly expensive. If possible, charter buses to transport the children so the parents are never there. Do extensive planning to achieve the biggest bang for the week. You should schedule three one-hour rehearsals each day. In addition, have section rehearsals for new music in more than one part, conduct classes in music theory (ear training and sight singing), schedule ample play time with numerous planned activities and some free time, ask someone in Christian Education to conduct a related study (for instance, you could have a Study on the "Psalms", if you have anthems based on Psalm text), and possibly offer some crafts classes from time to time. Print up the schedule to give to the children before they leave for choir camp and take additional copies with you that are included in their repertoire packet.

PROMOTION: Use the 30 days prior to the Choir Camp for an **all out** promotion. Actually, start placing the dates and location of the camp in the church bulletin each week, three months ahead. Six weeks ahead, write an article for the church bulletin regarding choir camp; make each week's article different. Let them know that more information about the camp is available from the Music Office. Thirty days ahead, write to every child in the Sunday school from rising 3rd grade up inviting them to attend Choir Camp, making the camp and singing in the choir as attractive as possible. Ask them to respond with their camp registration to the music office in 10 days. After the 10-day deadline, follow up by calling every child who has not registered. This call should be made by **THE DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**. Do not leave messages but keep trying until you reach every child and have a personal conversation with him/her. Nothing takes the place of this personal contact! If you should find that finances are a problem, see if you can locate a sponsor for that child.

NOTE: If you are successful in this promoting at the beginning of the year, you should not have any further recruiting during the year. Work to maintain loyalty from those who attended choir camp. The children who might come in later will have missed a big part of the preparation experience for the year. If they come in feeling behind, they will probably get discouraged and quit and you will have lost that child for good. Suggest that prospective members should plan to attend choir camp next year. However, always audition new prospective members and it is OK to make exceptions to the rule if an outstanding talent shows up but be careful about those exceptions.

William G.

97

What have you done for recruitment?

- In early August we send out a postcard to EVERY choir-age child in the church, inviting them to join choir.
- We send a welcome/invitation letter to every family who has ever had a child attend choir or summer MusiCamp. The letter also includes a choir registration form for every child in the family.
- During the 3rd and 4th Sundays of August, I have a registration table set up in our main thoroughfare area of the church. The previously mentioned postcard and letter tell families what Sundays I will be having registration. Appropriate advertising is put in the Worship Guide insert and the church's magazine.
- Information about Children's Choirs is also on the church's web site.
- Towards the end of the year, we have a large group concert. This is not a "performance" but an "inform-ance." Each choir shares a fun activity that they have done in choir and we talk about the skills that are learned in each different choir. It gives the families an idea of what they can look forward to as their child matriculates through our program. It also gets the kids excited about moving up to the next choir!
- We have a MusiCamp every summer which is open to ALL children ages Kinder - 5th grade. This gives them an opportunity to "try-out" choir for a week and get to know the different adults who help with children's choirs. At the final concert we give out information about our choir program.
- We do not limit our choir membership to church members only. We have had several non-church families send their children to choir, especially those in the home schooling community. Many like having the opportunity for their children to participate in a traditional choir/music education program.
- We are not a performance oriented program, but rather a process oriented program. This allows us to spend a lot of our rehearsal time playing instruments, rhythm and singing games, etc. We do so much more than just learn anthems to sing on Sunday! The kids really love to come to choir and many tell us that it is their favorite day of the week!

I mail out a schedule at the beginning of each semester which has the dates each choir is scheduled to sing in worship for the entire semester, as well as dates that we will not be having choir rehearsal (Ash Wednesday, Spring Break, etc.) This is printed on one-half of an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of card stock. I attach a magnet to the back so families can post it on the fridge and can refer to it as they are planning their schedules. I am often told how appreciative they are to have the choir schedule to far in advance.

Teresa G.

98

I was able to persuade [a few youth] (four on a good day) to stay for an hour after regular Sunday services, usually "bribing" them with pizza, burgers or something. We had a few youth trios and some youth-adult ensembles. I would not call it "successful," but it worked, in its way.

Brad P.

99

What have you done for recruitment?

We send letters of recruitment to persons eligible in the fall, with monthly/quarterly bulletin and email reminders of invitation. We specifically look at 2-8 grade. Our younger (preschool through 1st grade) meets during our church school time, and only sings once or twice a year.

Mark B.

100

Recruitment

We have used the following techniques over the years:

- Letter sent to all families with children in K-6 grades prior to rehearsals starting in September
- Article that advertises ALL musical groups prepared for the August issue of the church monthly newsletter
- Posters prepared and placed around the church, especially on bulletin boards near the Sunday School classrooms

- Moments for Mission: a short appeal during the announcements portion of the workshop services (these should be fun, colorful, and include some of the singers, if possible!)
- This year we tried a sign-up campaign for 3 or 4 weeks prior to the first rehearsal. This was little work and very successful. It allowed interested parents to ask questions of those who sat at the table (near the primary entrance) and also enabled us to get reliable contact information. We had a much better idea of who would be at our first rehearsals and did reach new families this way.

Denise C.
Rosie J.

101

Bringing a friend from school or another church increases the size of the group most easily.

For recruitment I have tried to get school age children in the church's daycare/pre-school/after school center to participate and this year finally got one taker. Hopefully this will grow to more next year. Some of the children belong to other churches, so a monthly Sunday service commitment is sometimes not possible for families.

Return interest is generated for some eager to participate in the local fall AGO annual choral festival service (joint children's choir participation singing two anthems) just for the opportunity to sing at the Naval Academy chapel (very impressive venue "right in our back yard.") Again, this takes one child attending to spread enthusiasm with the others.

Very small group this year - 5. But one child has just brought 2 friends since the new semester at school.

Last year area ecumenical directors expressed concern about opportunities for children to sing in large groups and with adults, so this year's ecumenical choral fest will highlight children's anthems (4?) and children singing with adults (2 anthems?) and then a couple of anthems by joint adult choirs alone. We hope this experience will encourage children to stick with choral singing.

Sometimes I get a child attending because their school schedule does not permit them to take chorus at school and the parent asks about our program (this holds for the teen group as well.)

We do an intergenerational church-wide music drama each winter and the children's choir participates in one scene; this has sometimes brought children to the drama the next year for speaking and singing roles as well as the children's choir participation.

Recruitment then centers on "bring a friend," the opportunity to sing in a group, the opportunity to sing in special venues, an enhancement to current after-school program. Although I would love to have a dozen kids every year, the kids who start do not drop out midyear---some measure of meeting a need. To stop the program for a year, I think, would be disastrous---doubt we would get it going again - so we started this year with 4 and are now at 7.

Susan P.

102

As far as recruitment is concerned, "pitches" are given in every form of media we have – email, newsletter, phone, website.

Louise A.

103

In addition to singing periodically in our worship services, the children present two musicals a year, one at Christmas time and the other one in the Spring. The schedule may be slightly altered as we get closer to the presentation of the musical with a more extended singing time and just one other activity that week.

What have you done for recruitment?

We schedule a "Registration Party" each year at some fun location to kick off each year. That information is mailed to all prospective members in the church. After that, recruitment is ongoing with articles in the newsletter at various times.

Lahonda S.

104

VBS in summer and a follow up “choir” to sing in worship a succeeding Sunday later in the summer.

Children’s parts/verses added to the adult choir cantata at Christmas.

Short-term children’s choir for Christmas drama and hymn sing.

Winter time: An afterschool fellowship and exercise group using VBS style music and motions to provide a space for children to sing and play in the winter. This is not a choral performance aim, rather a missional one to the children in the neighborhood.

Most rehearsals for these type of events are either on Sundays after worship for a half hour or on Wednesday nights prior to the adult choir rehearsal when I am already at the church.

I took an informal survey of what nights are good for the most “loyal” families and then I considered my schedule as I am in seminary full time as well. I found for these short term projects that if the children wanted to be there, they were able to make it work. Advanced planning and save the date announcements some times work.

What have you done for recruitment?

Personal invitation. Hugs to the kiddos in worship. Calls to parents to invite. Bulletin announcements, newsletter articles, Sunday morning announcements.

Our church operates on the verbal system still, so talking to people to get the word out is still essential. I can use email for only a select few families.

Having the children sing in worship has been success for getting future participation. This church is eager for places for children to fit in, and the older folks are craving to have the children be visible.

I celebrate each ministry with follow up thank yous, newsletter testimonies, pictures if possible.

Abby C.

105

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee now has 1/3 of the music staff budget to work with, along with an increase approved by Church Council, to begin paying accompanists for the early “contemporary” service and to begin paying either a children’s choir director or a youth choir director, whichever emerges first. Hopefully one of these two ensembles will emerge this year or next.

Mark T.

106

What have you done for recruitment?

Strategies include: personal invitation; interfacing with kids attending children's events such as VBS and BibleZone; staying in touch with our Children's Director and her ministry team; asking parents who have children in our age level if their kids might be interested in participating; writing articles for the church newsletter; making announcements in worship; posting information on the church website; creating music ministry flyers and making them available to new members and visitors; and talking to kids and parents at our annual Ministry Fair in which we highlight all the ministries of the church.

Nylea B-M.