

11 ways to **Celebrate** in your Youth & Children's ministry!

Giving thanks, marking milestones and successes, encouraging one another, and acknowledging God's abundant blessings are all ways we can celebrate! Celebration, in both big and small ways, is an essential part of our Youth & Children's ministries. Check out these eleven ways you can start celebrating today!

- ✿ **Celebrate kids in front of their parents.** It is so rewarding for a parent to hear good things about their children. *Let parents know when their child does something praiseworthy, whether sharing a thought that added to bible study discussions, showing kindness to a new student, showing a small step in cleaning up bad language or improving behaviour, having solid bible knowledge, helping week after week with set-up without being asked, or just being a solid all-round kid. Email, text, or call a parent - or catch them at the Corps - and let them know!*
- ✿ **Celebrate parents in front of their kids.** Kids spend a lot of time in front of the TV, where even the Family Channel, ironically, often tears down the efforts of parents in an attempt to get a laugh. *How about highlighting some significant accomplishments in parents' lives, showing a video montage of kids honouring or saying "thank you" to their parents, or reserving priority seating for parents at the front during your next Family Celebration Sunday?*
- ✿ **Celebrate and affirm the efforts of single parents.** Being a single parent is a difficult job - why not offer some assistance to single parents, while giving them some encouragement along the way? *Take time to publicly affirm them. Collect a list of services - e.g. babysitting, shopping, running a quick errand, driving kids to school or youth group events, making lunches for a day, a coffee or lunch outing for some adult conversation time - that members of your congregation could provide and that single parents could sign up for if they wish.*
- ✿ **Celebrate families.** With the ever-growing concern surrounding the state of the family, never before has it been so important to celebrate the gift of family and foster healthy family relationships centred in Christ. *How about interviewing some families on selected Sunday mornings? Introduce their family to the Corps and have them share ways their family stays connected to Jesus and to each other, and how their connection to your Corps helps them to do this. Invite corps and community families to a Family-Centred Event, e.g. a carnival, Christmas breakfast, Easter egg hunt, pumpkin carving party, giant family board game night, or family dinner & a movie - and let them know your Corps is a place that values and celebrates family!*

- ✿ **Celebrate leaders and volunteers.** Week after week, month after month, year after year... volunteers give of their time and energy to invest in the spiritual growth of our youth and children. Let's show them some love and appreciation and celebrate their dedication. *How about a video on a Sunday morning where kids honour leaders and share what they have learned from their teaching and example? Maybe some little kids standing in giant shoes sharing words of appreciation for retiring or long-service youth workers, highlighting the "big shoes" that will now need to be filled because of the great impact this volunteer has had on kids' lives. Handwritten notes of appreciation from kids and parents, a special coffee hour ("Thanks a Latte!"), a small gift of a candle ("No one can hold a candle to you - thanks for letting your light shine!") or a couple of Sharpie markers ("You've made a lasting and permanent impression on our kids!") are little ways to show big appreciation! Throw a volunteer appreciation meal where the kids serve, or a spa day where a local spa pampers your volunteers.*

- ✿ **Make significant spiritual occasions a real celebration.** Significant spiritual occasions (dedications, decisions for Christ, soldiership enrolments, moving up ceremonies, rites of passage, etc.) are a really big deal in our kids' lives, so we should treat them that way! *Celebrate by giving time and effort in the careful attention to adequate preparation of the individuals involved, a special ceremony which is meaningful and memorable, a thoughtful and useful gift appropriate to the occasion, special presentation of documents (framed certificates will help encourage placement in a significant place in the home), and adequate, timely follow-up. Celebrate these special times together with a time of fellowship after the service.*

- ✿ **Make an entire worship service a celebration party.** After all, isn't that what worship is - a time of adoration and celebration of who God is, and all that he has done for and through his people? Even God's angels celebrate his work of salvation when even one sinner turns to Him! *Decorate the sanctuary, use noisemakers along with the worship team, release a net of balloons and confetti poppers at the end in celebration of how awesome God is and the amazing things he has done in the lives of his people at your Corps, and celebrate together after the service - with cake! What a great opportunity to worship together and celebrate diversity in your congregation. Why not celebrate the many gifts God has given your young people by having them lead the whole worship service, including the sermon?*

- ✿ **Celebrate intergenerational connections.** We were not meant to go it alone in our faith journey. There is much to celebrate and learn from each other. *Invite Seniors to teach kids to bake, cook, sew, peel vegetables, or garden after school, or bring them as guests to your youth worship to show the kids their well worn bibles filled with notes and highlighted wisdom gleaned over the years. Partner with your Corps' Community Care Ministries to have students share in this ministry. Link kids to a prayer partner when they graduate Jr. High that will stay with them through their High School years. Work together across generational lines for fundraising efforts, service projects and special events. Stand at Christmas kettles together. Have your kids throw an appreciation tea for those 50+ and celebrate the Godly example and heritage that is theirs at your Corps.*

✿ **Celebrate each other.** Celebrate life. Celebrate milestones. Celebrate good times, and even celebrate how God has seen kids through tough times. "If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance." (1 Corinthians 12:26 MSG) *How about throwing an "everybody's birthday" party, a ritzy formal outing for those graduating from high school, or an end-of-the-school-year bash? Set aside times to share stories, laugh and pray together. Use the mail (yes, actual mail) to send cards, announcements, and personal notes of affirmation to kids. Always take pictures of your youth & children's ministry activities and display them in your corps for everyone to see, maybe with a caption contest for the congregation to participate in.*

✿ **Celebrate what God is doing.** We often race through the ministry program year - from event to event, season to season - without taking the time to celebrate where God has noticeably been at work in our ministries and kids' lives. Acknowledging God's work generates momentum and gets people excited about what God is doing and helps them realize that He is indeed a living God who is always working. *Invite students to share personal stories of where they have seen the evidence of God's work, and point out to them the observations that have been made by your officers and congregation. Have kids come to Christ in recent weeks? Have visitors attended and friends been brought? Has there been a successful event, an extraordinary discussion after a lesson, new volunteers signing up, or an incredible week at camp or on a mission trip? Take time to announce and celebrate both the small and big victories, and look forward together to what God will continue to do in the weeks ahead!*

✿ **Celebrate and encourage growth.** Notice and acknowledge the ways you see kids growing in their faith, no matter how small the steps. *Have small group leaders write a personal note to their students celebrating how they are growing spiritually. Encourage students to help one another along the faith journey and provide opportunity for them to do so in tangible ways - maybe boards posted with students' names on which others can write positive words of affirmation and encouragement, or a T-shirt Sunday on which kids "high five" each others' T-shirts with painted hands while offering an encouraging word or a short prayer for them. Set a reasonable goal for physical growth in your Youth & Children's ministry and celebrate when you get there, perhaps with a "Break the Record" Sunday! Provide opportunities for leaders to grow both personally and professionally, and celebrate them as they complete modules of training.*

This is God's work. We rub our eyes - we can hardly believe it! This is the very day God acted - let's

Celebrate

Psalm 118: 23-24 (MSG)