We know you care about kids...

We do, too!
That’s why we attempt to ensure that all crafts, toys, and gizmos meet or exceed national safety standards—and are produced by manufacturers that don’t use child labor or abuse their labor force. You can order Group resources knowing that in addition to caring for your kids, you’re also caring for children elsewhere.

Let’s keep kids safe!
We strive to provide products that are mechanically reliable and hold together during normal, intended usage. Items are also checked for flammability, and both paint and surface coatings are checked for heavy metals—including lead.
You can help your children stay safe by seeing that toys and gizmos are used as designed, for the purposes designed, and that any broken pieces are disposed of promptly and properly. We value your feedback. If you become aware of a problem affecting the safety of any of our products, please inform us immediately.

Relational
Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential
What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

Applicable
The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God’s Word.

Learner-based
Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.
Don’t just teach about the Bible. Change lives!

FaithWeaver Friends is a resource God will use to change the lives of the children in your church.

FaithWeaver Friends lessons encourage children to focus on the one most important thing in life: a growing relationship with Jesus. In Luke 10:41-42 (the Martha and Mary visit), Jesus said, “Martha, Martha…you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.” Only one thing. Every week, the activities at FaithWeaver Friends help children focus on this one thing, a growing relationship with Jesus. Whether they’re exploring Bible passages from the Old Testament or the New Testament, learners will be challenged to grow closer to Jesus every week.

You’ll be thrilled at the way FaithWeaver Friends encourages learners to weave faith into life. By providing meaningful activities, great discussions, and personal challenges, FaithWeaver Friends takes learners past “head knowledge” of the Bible and into heart- and life-change.

FaithWeaver Friends works great with FaithWeaver NOW and Kids Own Worship. All three programs follow the same scope and sequence to help you reinforce the Bible message all week long.

FaithWeaver Friends is where kids experience God’s love through friendships. FaithWeaver Friends helps kids deepen their relationships with God, one another, and those who need a helping hand. Through prayer, praise, and journaling, kids deepen their friendship with God. By rotating through activity centers in small groups, kids grow in friendship with one another. And through community service projects, kids learn the blessing of being a friend to those in need.

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FaithWeaver Friends helps kids become...

- **Friends with God**
  Through prayer, praise, and journaling, kids deepen their friendship with God.

- **Friends with one another**
  By experiencing community in small groups, kids grow in friendship with one another.

- **And Friends with those in need**
  Through kid-sized service projects, kids learn the blessing of being a friend to those in need.

Thom and Joani Schultz
Chairman and Chief Creative Officer
Group Publishing, Inc.

**Friends Love at All Times…**
**Proverbs 17:17**

FaithWeaver Friends helps kids become...

**Friends with God**
Through prayer, praise, and journaling, kids deepen their friendship with God.

**Friends with one another**
By experiencing community in small groups, kids grow in friendship with one another.

**And Friends with those in need**
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Thanks for joining the FaithWeaver Friends family! Your church is now one of thousands that weekly draw tens of thousands of children into a time of fun, friendship, and spiritual growth.

Here’s what you can expect to see in the coming months:

**You’ll see kids’ lives change.**

Friends will help your children grow in their relationship with Jesus and help them apply their faith to daily life. You’ll watch it happen as you see kids dive into service projects, make weekly entries in their faith journals, and learn to worship in new, heartfelt ways. Plus, Friends is fun!

You’ll notice a few other changes, too.

- **Discipline problems all but evaporate.** That’s because for every five kids, there’s an adult or teenage Circle of Friends leader who knows those children by name; who cares if they’re there; who’ll greet those kids with a warm smile and a hug; and who remembers birthdays, new pets, scraped knees, and special prayer requests.

- **Attendance soars.** Hey, what kid doesn’t like hanging out with friends, having fun? Most Friends programs grow as kids reach out to buddies who don’t know Jesus.

- **And kids are doers of the Word as well as hearers!** As your children do child-size service projects, they’ll experience discipleship in action.

**You’ll see volunteers’ lives change.**

Friends helps your volunteers connect with kids in meaningful ways. The simple See-It Do-It™ leader guides make it easy to prepare, so volunteers have more time and energy to focus on kids.

- **You’ll have happy volunteers.** The quick prep and powerful, on-target activities will earn you two thumbs up, week after week. But Friends gives your volunteers even more...

- **Your volunteers will grow spiritually.** Grown-ups apply Bible truths to their lives with devotions in their FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guides. Your Friends program will energize your volunteers and move them deeper in their relationships with Jesus.

**Your life will change, too.**

- **You’ll connect with more kids than ever.** Every inch of Friends encourages relationship-building, so you’ll have opportunities to communicate with kids, volunteers, and families in your church. You’ll impact the lives of children in significant ways.

- **You’ll help build strong families in your church.** You’ll help your kids have a strong faith foundation at church and at home. Friends is packed with opportunities to reach out and support families in your church as well as families who have never visited a church.

- **You’ll see God at work in kids’ lives.** The faith journals kids create give you a window into what they think and feel and help you minister more effectively. You’ll actually be able to see how God is impacting young lives!
Here’s what you most need to decide and do before your first meeting...

1. **Decide when you’ll meet and for how long.**

Most FaithWeaver Friends programs meet for 90 minutes, but some meet for just an hour, and some meet for more than two hours. What’s the time slot you want to fill? There’s enough material to fit almost any schedule. Friends is flexible!

2. **Decide if you’ll involve preschool kids, elementary kids, or both.**

Some Friends programs include just elementary kids. Others use only the preschool part of Friends. Many churches use both parts of the program. It’s up to you!

3. **Decide which Discovery Centers you want to include.**

You’ll find a chart on page 7 that gives examples of how to organize our program for one-hour, 90-minute, and two-hour time slots. On page 9 you’ll find a chart where you can diagram your own program. Just plug in the Discovery Centers you want to include in your program.

If you don’t have time to use all the Discovery Centers, you can mix and match them, giving your kids greater variety and making your program even more fun!

4. **Decide where you’ll meet.**

You’ll need a place that holds all your kids for the Opening and Closing Celebrations and for journaling. And you’ll need places for the Discovery Centers to meet too. The good news: Friends is flexible! See page 13 for suggestions about using your space.

5. **Decide how many volunteers you want.**

You’ll need one leader for each Discovery Center and one Circle of Friends leader for every five children. You probably won’t recruit all your leaders today, but you can review all the practical help you’ll find in the Recruiting and Training Your Team section on page 33.
It’s as easy as 1...2...3...and 4!

At FaithWeaver Friends children will...

1. gather at the Opening Celebration,
2. rotate through Discovery Centers in small groups,
3. reflect on God’s Word and apply what they’ve learned as they write in faith journals, and
4. rejoin their friends for the Closing Celebration!

Because Friends is flexible, it fits your time schedule...
Discovery Centers

Kids love variety.
Adult volunteers like easy preparation.

Discovery Centers meet both needs.

Discovery Centers are learning centers visited by small groups of children and leaders as they rotate through the Friends program. Each Discovery Center lasts 15 minutes, and a Discovery Center leader may present that 15 minutes of material up to five times. It depends on how many Discovery Centers you decide to use.

Each week Discovery Centers provide a variety of ways for children to explore the same Bible Point as they grow in relationship with Jesus and others.

There are Discovery Centers for elementary-age kids and Discovery centers for preschoolers. The preschool centers are outlined on pages 14 and 15. Here are the Discovery Centers you can choose for your elementary kids:

The Games Discovery Center is where children play noncompetitive, fun games. As they play, children also deepen relationships with each other and their small-group leader.

The Surprise Station is where kids are always kept guessing. Why? Because this station changes from week to week. Sometimes there’s a guest speaker. Other times there’s an activity, a science experiment, or a project to make.

The Snack-It Café features tasty snacks kids make themselves—usually to share with their friends. And the snacks reinforce the day’s Bible Point, so even snack time is learning time.

The Music & Memory Discovery Center is where children dig deep into God’s Word through Scripture, songs, or activities that help children learn and apply key Bible verses. Children do more than just memorize words; they let the meaning of key passages sink deeply into their hearts and minds.

The Projects-With-a-Purpose® Discovery Center is where kids roll up their sleeves and create a craft that reinforces the day’s Bible Point. As children work, they also discuss what they’re learning and what it means in their lives.
Diagram and Plan Your Own Program Here

Use this handy chart to diagram how your program will flow.

1. Decide if you’re using both the elementary and preschool portions of Friends.
2. Decide how many centers you’ll use. Fill in the names of the centers. Remember that you can always substitute a Snack-It Cafe for the Surprise Station some week if you want to keep kids guessing about what’s coming next. Each center reinforces the same Bible Point!
3. Have fun! You’re helping kids grow in their relationship with Jesus!

---

Permission to photocopy this chart from Getting Started With FaithWeaver Friends granted for local church use. Copyright © Group Publishing, Inc. group.com
Planning Timetable

Use this handy section to outline what you’ll do next!

Three months or more before your first meeting

1. **Begin praying** for your program. Ask God to prepare the hearts of parents, volunteers, and children who will participate.
2. **Choose a format** for your program.
   - When will you meet?
   - How long will your weekly program last?
   - Will you include both elementary and preschool children?
3. **Establish a budget.** Set guidelines about fees and fund raising. Communicate budget information to your steering committee if you’re part of a church’s Christian education program. Check out the Fees and Fundraising section on page 72 for tips.
4. **Meet with your facility host.** If you’ll be meeting in a church, make sure your facility needs and schedule don’t conflict with other events. If they do, arrange to resolve the conflict.
5. **Begin publicizing your FaithWeaver Friends program.** You’ll find a wealth of ideas and resources in the Publicity section on page 61.
6. **Begin recruiting Discovery Center leaders.** See the Recruiting and Training Your Team section (p. 33) for more details and helpful job descriptions.

Two months or more before your first meeting

1. **Estimate the attendance at FaithWeaver Friends.** It’s not as impossible as it sounds! A quick “straw poll” in your Sunday school program will give you an idea of how many church kids are interested. If you advertise in other churches and the community, you can probably add an additional 50 percent to your in-house estimate. And some midweek programs double to triple within six months.
2. **Order FaithWeaver Friends and FaithWeaver Friends Preschool materials.** It’s easy! Use the handy order form in your FaithWeaver Friends catalog, or call your local curriculum provider. Or you can order on the web at group.com!
3. **Survey your facilities,** and decide where you’ll put each Discovery Center.
4. **Hold the scheduled leader training meeting.** Meet in a room large enough to let you try out some Friends games and activities. Before the meeting, set up a TV and DVD player. Bring the Discovery Center leader guides and photocopies of the “For Circle of Friends Leaders Only” handouts (pp. 45-48, 56). And don’t forget to provide yummy Snack-It Café treats! Let leaders explore the guides, and then lead them in one activity from each guide.

Plan to meet for at least 90 minutes so that there’s time to answer questions.
5. Begin recruiting Circle of Friends leaders. Use the materials and techniques described in the Recruiting and Training Your Team section (p. 33).

6. Ask Discovery Center leaders to begin gathering supplies. Be prepared to fund reimbursements promptly.

One month or more before your first meeting

1. Recruit additional volunteers. In addition to Discovery Center leaders and Circle leaders, recruit volunteers to help with registration and, if applicable, child care for the staff.

2. Continue publicity. Invite children in your church and community. Hang posters. Review the Publicity section (p. 61) for more ideas.

3. Begin preregistration. Photocopy the FaithWeaver Friends Registration form on page 70. Insert copies in your church bulletins, distribute copies in Sunday school classes, and keep a supply in the church office. Encourage parents from your church to preregister their children and their children’s friends. This will make your first day more manageable.

4. Meet with each Discovery Center leader one-on-one. Discuss what supplies the leaders need or concerns they have. Answer questions relating to their Discovery Centers. A quick meeting not only prevents miscommunication, but also helps your volunteers feel appreciated.

5. Use technology! If your host church has a telephone answering machine, add Friends information in the recorded message. If the church has a website, add information there. If there’s an email list of appropriate children to contact through a church’s children’s ministry, submit an outbound message for the church’s review.

6. Create a schedule for Circles of Friends to rotate through your Discovery Centers. It’s easy—just let every Circle of Friends leader know where to take his or her Circle first, second, and third. The layout of your facility will probably dictate a logical direction and traffic flow. Keep it simple; you don’t want any Circles getting lost! For instance, always have Circles rotate clockwise.

Two weeks before your first meeting

1. Check registration. Make sure you have enough faith journals and sticker sheets. Order extras just in case; many programs experience last-minute add-ons, first-day surprises, and unexpected increases as kids bring their friends. Also be sure you have enough Circle of Friends leaders. Remember, these leaders don’t need to prepare anything!

2. Check your supply collection. If you’re still missing items, place an announcement in your church bulletin. Gather or purchase additional supplies as necessary.

3. Continue publicity. Send out news releases. Announce Friends in worship services and other church gatherings. Put the “FaithWeaver Friends ‘If’ Game” inserts (p. 65) in church bulletins. During your worship service, have volunteers perform the publicity skit. The skit is located on page 66.

4. Assign kids to Circles of Friends. For details, see the Registration section (p. 67).
5. **Meet with Discovery Center leaders again.** Do they all have required supplies? Any questions? Work together to smooth out any last-minute details.

6. **Decide when and where Discovery Center leaders and Circle of Friends leaders will meet the first day.** Have your staff arrive early enough for a brief prayer time and then to greet children and assist with registration. Be sure each Circle of Friends leader has a large sign with his or her name written on it. Ask registration leaders to escort each child to his or her leader or to at least point out the right person.

**The day after your first meeting**

1. **Call the Discovery Center leaders and Circle of Friends leaders.** Ask how it went and how they’re feeling. Make written notes of good ideas that could improve the program. Note how problems that came up were solved. Brainstorm about ways to avoid similar dilemmas in the future.
How FaithWeaver Friends® Fits in Your Facility

Big church? Small church? Meet in a school gymnasium? FaithWeaver Friends works for you!

Because it’s flexible, FaithWeaver Friends fits your facility, no matter where you meet.

At the Opening and Closing Celebrations, all the children and leaders meet together. You’ll need a space that accommodates the large gathering and lets kids sing together and enjoy the Instant Bible Drama.

Then it’s time for Circles of Friends to rotate through the Discovery Centers.

Discovery Centers can be separate rooms or different corners in a gymnasium. If weather and safety considerations permit, some Discovery Centers can be held outside. You don’t need separate classrooms with tables and chairs.

For journaling, children sit in their Circles back in the Opening and Closing Celebrations area.

Some churches with lots of kids but very little space lay plastic tablecloths on the floor of hallways, classrooms, and a gym. Kids rotate to these “centers” and do the activities there.

And some churches with few children don’t rotate the children at all; they rotate the leaders! First every Circle does one center’s activity, and then another leader leads the next center activity. As leaders switch places, the children stand up, stretch, and play a simple game or pair up to answer a simple question.

The point: Don’t let the size of your building or the number of your kids keep you from experiencing Friends! It’s flexible—and it’ll work for you!

Tip

If you will meet in one large room, here’s a helpful tip: Teach your kids to do “silent cheers” when cheering for their friends during game time. It’s easy: Kids stomp and wave their arms and gesture wildly but do so in silence. That way the cheering that makes a Games Discovery Center so much fun won’t keep Circles in the other Discovery Centers from hearing their leader.

You can meet in a gym...
Include preschoolers (ages 3 through kindergarten) in FaithWeaver Friends! Here’s why:

1. Preschoolers are at a perfect age to build a firm spiritual foundation in serving others, exploring the Bible, and loving God.
2. Many elementary-age kids have younger siblings. If you’re family-friendly and make room for preschoolers, elementary attendance will go up, too.
3. Consider your volunteer staff. How many have preschoolers? When you have purposeful, fun child care available, you attract and retain more volunteers.

So run—don’t walk—to get a FaithWeaver Friends Preschool going in your church!

How does FaithWeaver Friends Preschool compare with the elementary program?

FaithWeaver Friends Preschool shares the same rotational model as the elementary component, but lessons are geared to 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. And because the preschool program follows the same Bible Scope and Sequence the “big kids” use, preschoolers with older siblings in Friends will share the same passages in the Bible.

Preschoolers join the big kids at the Opening Celebration for singing and announcements but leave before the Bible story is presented. They head to their own Gathering Time, where the same Bible passage is presented in a more age-appropriate way.

Here are the Discovery Centers preschoolers can visit each week:

Gathering Time

Each week preschoolers meet with a lovable canine puppet named Theophilus. As children gather around Theo’s Playhouse, this cuddly puppy helps preschoolers experience each week’s Bible Point. While they’re at Theo’s Playhouse, children will hear the Key Verse from the Bible and will join in singing songs just right for preschoolers.

Each puppet skit provides an entertaining, interactive learning experience for children. And it’s easy—just use the FaithWeaver Friends Preschool Sound Effects & Songs CD and the handy, photocopiable scripts you’ll find in the Preschool Director & Storyteller Guide.

Preschoolers relate to Theo’s familiar fears, worries, and struggles. And kids love helping Theo apply Bible truths to his dilemmas.

After kids experience What’s in the the Bible, distribute weekly Bible Friends Dogtags to children. Help kids place Bible Story Stickers on their Dogtags and then clip these Bible story reminders onto their personal Doggie Collars.

The Bible passage is reinforced as children travel to Discovery Centers. And just as in the elementary part of Friends, preschoolers travel in Circles of Friends—five children and one adult or teenage leader.
**Make-It Discovery Center**
Here’s where preschoolers connect with each Bible story through art and crafts. Kids do what they enjoy most—express themselves!

Each Make-It activity engages kids’ imaginations and encourages their fine motor skills. As children have fun with paints, glue sticks, glitter, and clay, they create visual reminders of God’s Word to carry home.

**Play-It Discovery Center**
Here’s where preschoolers enjoy purposeful, hands-on fun that reinforces each weekly Bible Point. These sensory, exploratory activities deepen children’s understanding and build cooperative and social skills.

**Snack-It Café Discovery Center**
At the Snack-It Café Discovery Center, preschoolers have fun making their very own treats. Preschoolers love trying new things by themselves. And these simple, tasty treats let your kids make snacks *all by themselves*. Every treat reinforces the Bible story, helping children connect with and remember Bible truths.

**Learn-It Discovery Center**
The Learn-It Discovery Center revisits the weekly Bible story through storytelling, acting, singing, and rhymes. Preschoolers explore God’s Word through dramatic play, music, and interactive surprises. By engaging children’s imaginations, Bible truths and concepts become real for 3- to 5-year-olds.

**Making Bible Memories**
After preschoolers explore Discovery Centers, each preschooler will pause to draw and create in his or her *My Bible Memories Book*.

This is “journaling” preschoolers can and *want* to do. Circle of Friends leaders encourage preschoolers to remember their Discovery Center experiences and then apply the discoveries to their lives.

As children create, they discuss their artwork with their Circle of Friends leaders. Leaders ask questions, and quietly jot down what children say. Kids then take their drawings home so that parents can see the art and read what their preschoolers said. On the back of the drawing is a parent take-home page, packed with family encouragement and Bible passage-reinforcing activities.

After preschoolers journal, they can join the big kids for the Closing Celebration, or you can let them stay in their own area, enjoying some music from the preschool quarterly CD.

**How many leaders do I need for FaithWeaver Friends Preschool?**
Ideally each Discovery Center has its own leader, and every five children have a Circle of Friends leader. But if you have just five to eight children, you can lead the entire program yourself!

There’s more information about leadership positions in the Recruiting and Training Your Team section on page 33.
FaithWeaver Friends is affordable. Here’s what you need for your kids to have a powerful Friends experience:

**For elementary-age kids...**

*For each child, every three months, you’ll need:*
- 1 My Faith Journal,
- 1 Elementary Activity Stickers sheet, and
- Quarterly Fruit of the Spirit Keys.

*For each leader, every three months, you’ll need:*
- 1 FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide.

*For you, every three months, you’ll need:*
- 1 Discovery Center leader guide for each Discovery Center you use;
- the elementary Quarterly Drama, Sound Effects & Songs CD—it’s packed with skits, sound effects, and music; and
- the Director Quarterly Update which gives you a handy, quarterly, at-a-glance outline of what happens in Discovery Centers each week and what supplies are required.

**You’ll also need:**
- Getting Started With FaithWeaver Friends. You’re reading it now! It’s your guide to planning, staffing, and promoting your program. It also includes photocopiable handouts, letters, press releases, and more;
- Tube-a-loons™ for a wild and wacky game time—stock up now and then; and
- Boomwhackers. These colorful plastic tubes add fun to your Music & Memory Discovery Center and can be used in your Opening Celebration as well. One set of Boomwhackers will last for years!
For preschool kids...

For each preschooler, every three months, you’ll need:
- 1 My Bible Memories Book;
- 1 Preschool Activity Stickers sheet; and
- 1 set of Dogtags, Doggie Collars, and Bible Story Stickers.

For each leader, every three months, you’ll need:
- 1 FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide.

For you, every three months, you’ll need:
- 1 Discovery Center leader guide for each Discovery Center you use;
- the FaithWeaver Friends Preschool Sound Effects & Songs CD—it’s packed with sound effects and music; and
- the Director Quarterly Update which gives you a handy, quarterly, at-a-glance outline of what happens in Discovery Centers each week and what supplies are required.

You’ll also need:
- Getting Started With FaithWeaver Friends. You’re reading it now! It’s your guide to planning, staffing, and promoting your program. It also includes photocopiable handouts, letters, press releases, and more; and
- 1 Theophilus puppet for Preschool Gathering Time—this is a one-time purchase you’ll use again and again!

That’s all you need! See your FaithWeaver Friends catalog or visit us at group.com for a complete listing of available products to “plus” your program.
Glossary of FaithWeaver Friends® Terms

Here are quick definitions of FaithWeaver Friends terms you’ll want to know as you read this Director Manual:

• **Circle of Friends**: Five children of varying ages, plus one adult or teenage leader. For maximum fun and impact, multi-age your Circles of Friends.

• **Circle of Friends leader**: An adult or mature teenager who leads a Circle of Friends and travels to Discovery Centers with the Circle.

• **FaithWeaver Friends director**: The person who organizes and leads Friends, provides vision, affirms volunteers, and serves others.

• **Opening Celebration**: Here’s where children gather to connect with their Circles of Friends, explore a Bible story through an Instant Drama, sing songs, and celebrate a Wacky Holiday in a fun way.

• **Discovery Centers**: Each week these 15-minute centers let children explore the weekly Bible Point in varied, fun ways.

• **Discovery Center leader**: Each Discovery Center is led by someone who prepares 15 minutes of the weekly program. And the FaithWeaver Friends step-by-step See-It Do-It™ instructions make leading activities easy.

• **Journaling**: Each week Friends participants take time to pause, reflect, and write down or draw what God is teaching them.

• **Faith journals**: These colorful quarterly journals help track spiritual growth.

• **FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide**: Every leader uses this guide packed with Bible backgrounds, devotions, discussion questions, affirmations, tips, and more!

• **Weekly Challenges**: Each week kids find a weekly challenge in their faith journals to clip out, take home, and use to put learning into action!

• **Closing Celebration**: Here’s where children gather for a final blessing and celebration at the end of each week’s program.

• **Fruit of the Spirit Keys**: These cool, quarterly tokens go on key chains and are used to celebrate spiritual growth as kids reflect the fruit of the Spirit.

• **Other Keys**: Celebrate other milestones with colorful and collectable keys. Find out more about the keys and how to use them on page 20.

• **Gathering Time**: Here’s where preschoolers explore the Bible story with a cuddly puppy puppet, Theophilus the FaithRetriever™.

• **My Bible Memories Book**: This is the preschool journal. Children creatively respond to what they’ve learned and then take the page home to share with family members.
Why FaithWeaver Friends?

What makes FaithWeaver Friends work so well for your church?

• **At FaithWeaver Friends kids learn one important Bible Point each week.** Instead of trying to pour more information into kids than they can possibly remember or apply, Friends focuses on one key Bible Point per week. Kids talk about it, discover it, explore it, apply it, and carry it home in memorable, applicable ways.

• **At FaithWeaver Friends kids learn the way they learn best.** Not all kids learn the same way, so we offer multiple Discovery Centers to meet the needs of all sorts of learners.

• **At FaithWeaver Friends leaders teach the way they teach best.** Just like the kids, not all teachers and leaders think alike. Do you have a great storyteller in your congregation? Recruit that person to lead Opening Celebration. Do you have a great athlete? Recruit that person to lead Games. Because each Discovery Center is different, teachers can volunteer in their areas of expertise. And volunteers who aren’t teachers but who love to spend time with kids can serve as small-group Circle of Friends leaders.

• **At FaithWeaver Friends everyone has a special place.** Because kids travel in combined-age Circles of Friends, big kids and little kids learn to work together. Instead of competing with kids their own age, older children help younger children during activities and games. Younger children motivate the older children to be good examples.

Think of Circles of Friends as families in which kids naturally learn with and from one another. Social skills improve, self-esteem rises, cooperation increases, and discipline problems diminish.

• **At FaithWeaver Friends everyone has a special job.** Kids love having something special to do, and Friends gives kids that chance in their Circles of Friends. Plus, when children have special jobs to do to serve their friends, they learn about service, grow in self-esteem, and know they’ll be missed if they miss a week. For more information on giving each child a job, see page 47.

• **Best of all, at FaithWeaver Friends kids grow in relationship with Jesus.** Yes, they get to spend time with leaders and their friends, but they also learn how to grow closer to the best friend they could ever have—Jesus Christ.
What are Fruit of the Spirit Keys?

Kids love collecting things and enjoy having others notice their accomplishments. Friends “Fruit of the Spirit Keys” are inexpensive, fun tokens you can use to celebrate kids’ spiritual growth.

Please note that kids do not “earn” keys. Instead, kids receive keys as delightful gifts. When you see a child display in action a characteristic like love, joy, or another fruit of the Spirit, you can give that child a key to celebrate what God is doing in his or her life. Each quarter a different fruit of the Spirit is emphasized.

And the keys also help children notice Christ-like qualities in others too! When a child receives a Fruit of the Spirit Key, give that child a second key. The second key isn’t for the child to keep—it’s for the child to give away to someone outside of Friends. Imagine the opportunities for outreach and sharing when a child gives a bus driver a Faithfulness Key or a baby sitter a Gentleness Key.

If you wish, you can have kids place their keys on colorful Friends key chains.

Here are some of the bright, colorful, “key-lectible” Fruit of the Spirit Keys your kids will treasure:

- **Joy Key**
- **Peace Key**
- **Love Key**
- **Kindness Key**
- **Goodness Key**
- **Faithfulness Key**
- **Obedience Key**
- **Temperance Key**
- **Self-Control Key**

Kids aren’t the only ones who receive keys. Affirm your leaders with keys, too!

What about the other Keys?

The Fruit of the Spirit Keys are the most important ones of all, but there are lots of other reasons to celebrate with kids too! At Friends we use keys to commemorate service projects, completing a faith journal, performing a specific role within a Circle, and more.

When you use Friends keys, you guarantee that it won’t be only the kids who memorize well or excel in athletics who have keys at the end of the quarter. Rather, all the children will have keys celebrating moments of service and spiritual growth.

Here are the optional keys and how we suggest you use them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keys</th>
<th>to celebrate…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service Keys</strong></td>
<td>completion of service project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service to Jesus</td>
<td>completion of service project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service to Friends</td>
<td>completion of service project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service to Family</td>
<td>completion of service project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service to Host</td>
<td>completion of service project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service to Those in Need</td>
<td>completion of service project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service to Community</td>
<td>demonstration of each quarter’s “fruit,”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit of the Spirit</td>
<td>and so child can give keys to others</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How many volunteers do I need?

Here’s an easy way to estimate the number of volunteers you’ll need:

- For every five children, you’ll need one Circle of Friends leader.
- For every Discovery Center, you’ll need one center leader.

That’s it. Simple!

And if your program has fewer than 15 children, you can easily have one adult lead more than one Discovery Center.

What’s a faith journal?

These quarterly journals are designed especially for kids.

Each week everyone writes or draws reflective responses to specific faith questions based on the weekly Bible Point and Bible passage. Circle of Friends leaders read what kids in their Circles have written and jot quick, encouraging comments for the children to discover the next week.

Faith journals are spiritual-growth charts and memory-makers, and they’re sure to become cherished family keepsakes as parents collect their kids’ journals.

What are Daily Challenges™?

In the back of each My Faith Journal is a page with clip-apart Daily Challenges. Each challenge corresponds to one week’s lesson and helps children apply what they’ve learned in a practical way. Ask Circle leaders to help children cut out their challenges each week and take them home to complete. Celebrate the growth that occurs as children put their faith into action!

How do I equip my leaders?

Each leader will need a FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide. Inside this guide leaders will find Bible background information for each Bible passage, along with a devotion to ensure each leader’s relationship with Jesus is growing. This guide also provides leaders with all the discussion questions so they’ll be ready to lead discussions at the Discovery Centers. Leaders will also find the week’s Key Verse, tips on connecting with kids, affirmations, and more! Order one for each leader in your program.
You’ll also find a training session in each Director Quarterly Update. Schedule a training session each quarter to keep your leaders updated and focused on helping children grow in relationships with Jesus and others.

How will kids learn Bible passages?

Each week kids will be exposed to a Bible Point as well as a corresponding Bible passage and Key Verse from the Bible. The FaithWeaver Friends Scope and Sequence (in your Director Quarterly Update) shows the Bible content that kids will cover during the current quarter.

If you value having kids learn Scripture, you’ll be pleased to know that at Friends children hide God’s Word in their hearts by both memorizing and understanding key Scripture passages.

Each week during the Opening Celebration, elementary kids hear the week’s Key Verse from the Bible. Preschoolers are introduced to their Key Verse when they’re at Theo’s Playhouse during Gathering Time. Preschoolers learn a shorter or adapted version of the verse, and they repeat the same verse for three to four weeks before learning a new one.

In the Music & Memory Discovery Center, children may learn passages by singing them or participating in activities that help children make sense of the passages. You can almost see the light bulbs turn on as kids say, “I get it!”

Kids will find the Key Verse in their journals. Circle leaders guide children in reviewing this verse again and then making sure kids understand what the verse means and how it can be applied to their own lives. And during the Closing Celebration, the leader reviews the Key Verse one last time, helping to cement the verse in children’s hearts and minds before they leave.

You’ll plant Bible truths in kids’ hearts and minds in ways that stick. And because kids learn in different ways, you’ll find activities designed for different kinds of learners—even learners who don’t memorize easily. All your children will be impacted by God’s Word.

How will children be introduced to Jesus?

The goal of FaithWeaver Friends is to help children grow closer in relationship with Jesus. For some kids, that means introducing them to Christ for the first time.

Every week an “evangelism” icon like the one to the left will appear somewhere in the elementary program. It may be during Surprise Station, Opening Celebration, or another part of the program. It’s seldom in the same place twice in a row.

These “evangelism moments” are logical places to present the gospel to children who haven’t yet committed their lives to Jesus. Because they occur throughout the program, be sure all of your staff knows how to present the gospel in a child-friendly way.

If a child brings up the subject, or you sense a child wants to know more about a relationship with Jesus, give this simple explanation:
God loves us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us. Jesus died and rose again so that we could be forgiven for all the wrong things we do. Jesus wants to be our forever friend. If we ask him to, he’ll take away the wrong things we’ve done and fill our lives with his love. As our forever friend, Jesus will always be with us and will help us make the right choices. And if we believe in Jesus, someday we’ll live with him forever in heaven.

You may want to lead the child in a simple prayer inviting Jesus to be his or her forever friend. You may also want to share one or more of the following Scripture passages with the child. Encourage the child to read the Scripture passages with you from his or her own Bible.

• John 3:16  • Romans 5:8-11  
• Romans 6:23  • Ephesians 2:4-8

Be sure to share the news of the child’s spiritual development with his or her parent(s) and Circle of Friends leader. And remember to celebrate! This is good news!

Why is outreach so important?

It’s possible to have a Friends program for just “your kids,” but you’ll discover the program soon grows stale.

FaithWeaver Friends is designed for evangelism—for equipping and motivating children to reach out to their families and friends. When that happens, more kids will come, more grown-ups will become involved, and your program will grow.

There’s a critical need for sharing Christ with children. A Barna Research Group’s nationwide survey determined that the probability of people accepting Christ as their Savior was related to their age. The data shows that people from ages 5 through 13 have a 32 percent probability of accepting Christ as their Savior. Young people from the ages of 14 through 18 have just a 4 percent likelihood of doing so, while adults (ages 19 through death) have only a 6 percent probability of making that choice.

It’s important that you make outreach to unchurched kids part of your Friends focus—and not just for the sake of unchurched kids. When your kids share their Christian faith with others, it reminds your kids of the incredible gift they’ve received in Jesus.

How does rotating small groups of kids work?

Using a rotational model makes life easy for you and your volunteers and helps deliver a consistently excellent program for your kids.

Each Discovery Center leader prepares just 15 minutes of the weekly program in an area of expertise and giftedness. That makes it possible for even busy parents to volunteer. You have a larger pool of leaders!

And because Discovery Center leaders present the same material several times, they actually improve as they go through a day’s program.

Having kids move from site to site burns off their surplus energy without them resorting to fidgeting and acting up. The rotational model honors the way God has wired most kids.
And since there’s always a surprise waiting at each Discovery Center, kids enjoy moving from one center to the next. Every center reinforces the weekly Bible Point and Bible passage, so there’s never a wasted moment at Friends—even while traveling from one center to another!

### What’s a Circle of Friends?

Christian faith grows when we connect with other Christians. Because relationships matter, you’ll organize your kids into small groups—preferably multi-aged groups—that stick together for an entire quarter. The kids in each small group travel together from one Discovery Center to the next, experience Bible stories together, and grow in their faith together.

Each small group—a “Circle of Friends”—is comprised of five children and a Circle of Friends leader. Kids become accountable to one another and to their Circle of Friends leader (the group’s adult or teenage leader). When kids come through the door each week, they have friends waiting to greet them. And because they have special roles within their Circles, children feel that they belong at Friends. If a child should miss a week for some reason, the child’s Circle of Friends leader notices.

**Why multi-aged groups?** Because multi-aged groups function as “families” of learners. And just as in real families, older children help younger ones master new skills, learn from example, and have a chance to practice what they’re learning.

Older children enjoy being the “big kids” and having an opportunity to show their stuff! Give them the opportunity, and they’ll rise to meet your expectations.

**Why just five children in a group?** Circles of Friends put the “friends” in FaithWeaver Friends, and that’s a great reason to keep small groups small—to keep Circles of Friends at five children. And when you start with small groups, kids feel free to invite friends.

Another benefit of placing kids in small groups: Discipline problems all but disappear because no one has to compete for attention. Everyone is already noticed!

### What’s a Circle of Friends leader?

This is an adult or mature teenager who loves God, loves kids, and will commit at least one quarter (13 weeks) to serving a group of five children.

Circle of Friends leaders aren’t teachers; they are facilitators who listen to kids, pray for kids, and write affirming comments in kids’ faith journals every week.

They’re the grown-ups with whom kids often form the closest bonds and who have the most influence in children’s lives.

### What jobs do kids have in their Circles of Friends?

After Circles of Friends are formed, kids choose jobs. Each job should be represented in each Circle of Friends. If a Circle has fewer than five kids, some kids may have multiple jobs until the Circle grows. You’ll find a handout describing each job on page 47.
Here’s a quick list:

- Readers,
- Prayer People,
- Cheerleaders,
- Travel Coordinators, and
- Materials Managers.

Fifth-graders can even choose to be Circle of Friends assistant leaders. From time to time, the Circle of Friends leaders or Discovery Center leaders will call on kids to complete tasks that are part of their job descriptions.

Kids are excited to have special jobs! Encourage Circle of Friends leaders to call on children to fulfill their responsibilities as often as possible. The extra effort and patience it takes to plug children into service and ministry is worth it!

How do I assign kids to Circles of Friends?

Follow these simple guidelines and make your life easier!

- Use a pencil when filling in the “Circle of Friends Roster” (p. 69). You’ll undoubtedly make changes as the quarter progresses.
- It usually works best to assign siblings to different Circles. However, some parents may make special requests. Use your best judgment.
- If you anticipate behavior problems or have children with special needs, assign them to Circles that have experienced adult leaders.
- Assign children who are particularly helpful or cooperative to Circles that have teenage leaders.
- Be sure to leave room in a few Circles for children who join throughout the quarter.
- If a child brings a friend and the child’s Circle is already full, let the visitor stay with his or her buddy anyway. Once a visitor has begun coming regularly, adjust Circles to get the number of kids in each Circle back to five. See the Registration section (p. 67) for detailed information.

What’s a Discovery Center?

At FaithWeaver Friends, kids dig into Bible learning as they visit Discovery Centers. And each Discovery Center features a different Bible-learning activity.

Elementary-age Discovery Centers include:

- Projects—With-a-Purpose®,
- Music & Memory,
- Surprise Station,
- Snack-It Café, and
- Games.

Elementary children also enjoy the Opening and Closing Celebrations and journaling time.
Preschoolers have their own special Gathering Time after the Opening Celebration. Then they visit Discovery Centers, which include:

- Make-It,
- Play-It,
- Snack-It Café, and
- Learn-It.

Preschoolers work with their Circle of Friends leaders to create their own “journals” in their My Bible Memories Books.

Each Discovery Center is staffed by an adult or mature teenage leader who presents a 15-minute activity up to five times per meeting.

**What does a Discovery Center leader do?**

Each Discovery Center contains an activity, game, or snack that reinforces the week’s Bible Point and Bible passage. Leaders prepare 15 minutes of the weekly program and present it up to five times as Circles of Friends rotate through the Discovery Center.

Like every leader at Friends, the first priority of each Discovery Center leader is to help children grow in relationship with Jesus, one another, and their Circle of Friends leaders.

**How do preteens fit in?**

Many churches aren’t sure what to do with preteens. They seem too old to fit into the children’s ministry but too young for youth group. At Friends preteens can fill a number of roles. Check out the following options to find the perfect fit. Your kids can...

- **join Circles of Friends as assistant leaders.** Many preteens are ready for simple leadership roles, but they still enjoy participating in activities such as games, snack time, crafts, and biblical dramas. As Circle of Friends assistant leaders, they’ll help their Circle leaders keep kids together, work with younger children during Projects-With-a-Purpose, and do the more difficult tasks at the Snack-It Café.

- **become Discovery Center assistant leaders.** Your preteens are developing their gifts and talents and discovering what they excel at and enjoy. Being a Discovery Center assistant leader is a great way to encourage this process and provide a discipling opportunity. Do you know a preteen who’s developing a love for drama or music? How about a child who enjoys sports and other athletic activities? Discovery Center leaders love the extra help, and preteens enjoy the added responsibility of helping younger children do projects, crafts, or snacks.

- **help with preschoolers.** Some preteen kids are nurturing and caring—great qualities for helping preschoolers find their way at Friends. Have a few preteens help preschoolers find their Discovery Center leaders, show preschoolers the restrooms, play with shy children to get them accustomed to the preschool program, or simply be an extra set of helping hands.

Plus, they make great role models for younger kids. That’s a tremendous self-esteem-builder and confidence-booster for preteens.
What’s the FaithWeaver Friends Friendly Handshake?

Kids create the Friends friendly handshake by crossing their fingers as illustrated. Doing so creates a “cross” that represents Jesus. When kids shake hands, the handshake represents that Christ is in the middle of every relationship.

How are service projects integrated into FaithWeaver Friends?

Service projects are a powerful way to hide God’s Word where you want it most—in kids’ heads and hearts. As kids work together to accomplish something for others, they catch a vision for what it means to follow Christ and have a relationship with him. When they’re serving others, kids shift their focus off themselves and they see what God is doing in the world. They apply Scripture truths. And they come away from each service project realizing that they can make a difference.

Each quarter, kids will dive into six child-sized projects that let them serve...

- Jesus,
- friends,
- families,
- their host church,
- those in need, and
- the community.

We’ve built service projects right into the weekly program. For most projects you won’t need to make extra calls or round up kids at other times. And you’ll plug kids into projects that won’t break your budget or crowd your schedule.

In each FaithWeaver Friends Director Quarterly Update, look for a “service project” page. That’s where you can quickly see how projects are woven into the quarter.

Here’s more information about the six service opportunities:

1. Jesus
   In all ways children are encouraged to serve Jesus. They’ll pray, worship, and invite others to come to Friends. Children will grow in their willingness and ability to lead Christ-like lives.

2. Friends
   Serving friends is part of FaithWeaver Friends. Kids will purposefully reach out to friends in their neighborhoods and schools. Children affirm others by distributing Fruit of the Spirit Keys to people who display Christ-like character traits. And affirming others is part of the weekly program as kids learn to listen to and express love to one another.

3. Families
   Each quarter children have the opportunity to serve their families. They may leave secret notes of encouragement around their homes; they might lead a discussion, do a simple chore, or make a gift to be used by family members.

   Plus, each week children take home a Weekly Challenge from their faith journals. These challenges help children put what they’ve learned into action. Many of these challenges encourage actions in a child’s home, such as giving extra hugs or cleaning a room.

   Wait until parents realize that their kids are coming home from your Friends program with
servants’ hearts and positive attitudes. You’ll have parents waiting in line to register their kids for the next quarter!

4. Host Church
Most Friends programs meet in a church building. Every quarter you’ll do something to thank and affirm the church, school, or homeowner who hosts your program. Creative worship banners, notes to the pastor, a building cleanup, and other expressions of appreciation help your kids learn to respect the building and encourage your host to continue supporting your program.

5. Those in Need
Helping kids think past their own concerns is an important step toward making service a lifelong value. Each quarter children will fill care packages for college students, create cards or letters for the lonely or imprisoned, or express compassion in some other tangible way.

6. Community
There are dozens of ways to serve others in the community. From volunteering to help with a church-based ministry to stocking a food pantry or supporting a toys-for-kids collection, kids can take part in meaningful projects that are child-sized but make a huge impact. You’ll explore an option every quarter. Some projects will impact just your local community; some will reach even further!

You’ll honor kids’ participation in service projects with special FaithWeaver Friends Keys. For more information on these keys, see page 20.

How does FaithWeaver Friends reach families?

For better or worse, the greatest spiritual impact in a child’s life is his or her parents.

For kids raised in loving Christian homes, that impact draws them closer to God. Children growing up in unchurched homes aren’t nudged toward God.

Which means especially for unchurched kids, involving their families in Friends (and perhaps in your host church) is an important goal.

FaithWeaver Friends gives you a variety of ways to involve parents. Most require very little commitment, so parents can “test the water” before making a long-term commitment. Some roles require a spiritually mature believer. Others, such as making a guest presentation in the Surprise Station, can be done by a parent who’s still exploring a faith commitment.

Here are family-friendly ways to connect with parents and families through Friends:

1. Surprise Station
Each week at the Surprise Station Discovery Center, the leader is provided with an “Invite a Friend” option. This allows the leader to invite a member of the church or community to make a brief presentation about a specific hobby or profession that ties in with that week’s Bible Point. Actively try to include kids’ parents. Parents who would never consider “teaching” often don’t mind talking about a personal or professional passion like music, gardening, or investigating crimes.

The FaithWeaver Friends Registration Form asks parents to list hobbies or professional interests. Review the forms often.
2. **Closing Celebration**
This is where children receive keys and are affirmed for completed service projects. Children appreciate having grown-ups on hand to applaud, and Closing Celebrations provide a weekly chance to meet parents.

3. **My Bible Memories Books take-home pages**
One way to engage the parents of preschoolers is to jot notes on their weekly take-home papers. Because these sheets include artwork done by the preschooler and a note from the Circle of Friends leader, they’re usually read carefully. Include an invitation to visit, to help, or to stop by the “Donuts for Dad, Muffins for Mom Café.”

4. **Circle of Friends leaders and Discovery Center leaders**
Ask for parents to fill these vital roles. If they’re gifted and agree, you’ve involved a family. And if they hesitate because of the size of the commitment, offer to sign them up for a less-involved task as a compromise!

5. **Quarterly Closing Celebrations**
At the end of each quarter, children receive their completed faith journals to take home. It’s a proud moment and a big-time celebration! Communicate to parents that they’ll be honored along with their children.

6. **Donuts for Dad, Muffins for Mom**
Create a comfortable lounge area. Stock it with muffins and donuts. Have juices available or a pot of coffee brewing. Invite parents to stick around awhile after they drop off their kids or to come back 20 minutes early when they pick up their children. Ask parents to relax, have a snack, and chat with other parents.

Ask your church host to provide a member of the adult ministry staff to welcome parents and make them comfortable. Creating a “coffee shop” atmosphere encourages parents to talk. Consider inviting parents to join you if you choose to host a discussion group, Bible study, or marriage-enrichment seminar during this time.

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**How can FaithWeaver Friends be adapted for children with disabilities?**

Easily. In fact, Friends is in part already adapted.

You want each child at Friends to have a successful experience—including children with special needs. How do you guarantee these children will feel good about being at Friends and that your volunteers will feel competent working with special-needs children?

Relax. Good teaching is good teaching to all children. And effective ministry to kids is effective ministry to all kids. If your leaders are sensitive to each child in their care, they’ll make accommodation adjustments automatically. However, preparing your facilities and your volunteers for adaptations will greatly help the process.

Because Discovery Centers are learner-based, they appeal to different learning styles. And Friends’ fast-paced rotational model leaves kids with invisible disabilities (such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) little time for distractions. Plus, the one-to-five ratio of adults to children in Circles of Friends means every child gets personal attention frequently.

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“A Friend Says:

“My church had a couple of kids visiting on our first FaithWeaver Friends meeting, and the kids loved it so much, they convinced their mom to come back again on Sunday! Here’s the kicker—they were fourth-grade boys!”

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FaithWeaver Friends 29
Following are other factors that make Friends particularly easy to adapt for children with disabilities:

- FaithWeaver Friends doesn’t rely on reading skills. Only the faith journals consistently require reading, and Circle of Friends leaders can help by assisting with technical issues and then including all children in the discussion.

- There’s just one Bible Point each week. This helps children who find it hard to process a lot of information at one time. Circle of Friends leaders can help by stressing the Bible Point often.

- Leaders can also discover how to be more effective by checking in with parents of children with disabilities. Parents want their children to have a positive experience, too, and usually are willing to work with leaders to help make that happen. Circle of Friends leaders should talk to parents or caregivers about specific needs, such as—whether children have special equipment, such as wheelchairs, and how the area can be best adapted to accommodate such equipment.
—what kids can and cannot eat because of allergies.
—specific medical assistance children might require.
—specifics about what children need help doing and what they want to do for themselves. It’s important not to stereotype children who have physical or invisible limitations. The rest of the kids will take cues from the leader about how to treat individuals with disabilities. If the leaders communicate love and sensitivity, it’s sure to be imitated.

If you know physically challenged children will attend your program, make sure each Discovery Center is wheelchair accessible. And ask leaders to be open to adjusting their teaching in these ways:

**Greater intensity.** Children with disabilities often need extra help to participate in activities. Consider asking an additional person to join appropriate Circles of Friends to serve as peer mentors or “buddies” of children with disabilities. This allows the Circle leader to continue distributing attention equally among the group members.

**Greater duration.** When working with children with learning disabilities, lessons may require extra explanation. When leaders give one instruction at a time, use positive-language suggestions, and praise even the most minor achievements, they’ll help children with disabilities take pride in their accomplishments.

**Greater frequency.** A leader may need to more often establish limits, review rules, or re-explain instructions. In these instances, it’s best to repeat shared information to the entire group to benefit all the children with reinforcement.

Although there are plenty of surprises built into Friends, it’s often helpful to accentuate the predictable elements of the program when working with children with disabilities. Let your Circle provide a stable, secure environment in the midst of changing activities.

But the very first accommodation is also the most important: for Friends leaders to pray for hearts to reach out to kids who are different, to pray for sensitivity and a willingness to reassure kids they’re okay just as they are, and to pray for patience to try new things to connect with and teach kids who learn differently from the leaders.

To be, first and foremost, friends.
How does FaithWeaver Friends connect with FaithWeaver NOW™ Bible Curriculum?

FaithWeaver Friends works great with KidsOwn Worship® and FaithWeaver NOW™. Because each product uses the same Scope and Sequence, children explore the same Bible passage in all three curriculum lines—so you can use these products at different times in the week.

Teaching the same Bible passage throughout a week and in different ways cements the principles kids are learning for a lifetime and lets the learning go deep in their lives.

To review any of the FaithWeaver family of products, visit Group Publishing at group.com/sunday-school or ask your curriculum provider.
About Group Publishing...

Group Publishing is the creator of the FaithWeaver Friends program, and we’re delighted to be your partners in ministry! So you know, here’s what we believe about God, who we are, and what we’ve learned about connecting with kids.

What We Believe
We believe the Bible is the inspired, authoritative Word of God. We believe there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, in his virgin birth, in his sinless life, in his death on the cross, in his bodily resurrection, in his ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in his personal return. We believe people receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life through a relationship with Jesus.

You can count on FaithWeaver Friends to deliver biblically solid, faith-building materials, week after week.

Who We Are
Since 1974, Group Publishing has served churches and church leaders with an ever-increasing array of magazines, books, events, media, and curricula. If you’re using FaithWeaver NOW curriculum, you’ll find that the Bible passages your kids hear on Sundays are reinforced at Friends.

Visit us online at group.com or ask at your local Christian bookstore to find out more about Group or any of our resources.

What We’ve Learned About Connecting With Kids
FaithWeaver Friends helps you focus on the one most important thing—a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ—by incorporating our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it’s

Relational. Frankly, until kids know you care, they don’t much care what you know. Friends is all about relationships—between kids and kids, kids and their families, kids and mentoring adults, and kids and Jesus. Participants at Friends quickly discover that they’re connecting with others in deep, meaningful ways.

Experiential. You won’t find lectures or worksheets at Friends. Kids experience the Bible truths and learn by doing. Using multiple senses to learn increases retention of Bible truths up to tenfold.

Applicable. You’ll connect God’s Word to your kids’ daily lives. That moves your lessons from just information to real transformation.

Learner-based. You won’t be rushing through material, trying to cover the entire Bible in six weeks or less. The point isn’t how much you can teach: it’s how much your kids learn.

That’s why we deliberately use a variety of learning styles, why you’ll take time to involve your kids in service projects every quarter, and why you’ll soon see that your kids aren’t just talking about what they’ve learned—they’re living it.

We put those words in that order so we could make it easy for you to remember. It’s R.E.A.L. learning (clever, eh?). Your kids will always experience R.E.A.L. learning at FaithWeaver Friends. We promise.
FaithWeaver Friends is a relational program. Not just any warm body can fill the ministry roles you’ll need filled at Friends. Leader training can sharpen anyone’s ministry skills (and we’ll send you excellent leader training materials every quarter in your Director Quarterly Update), but you have to start with people who are loving and caring, who don’t consider children to be interruptions, and who will set aside any task to bend down and give a child an encouraging hug. Look for “people” people who value relationships.

FaithWeaver Friends is an ongoing program. Decide now precisely what you’ll ask volunteers to give. How much time, effort, energy, and money do you want them to contribute, and for how long? Are you seeking a quarterly commitment? an annual one? Will volunteers have to find their own substitutes if they get sick or go on vacation? Are there leader training sessions involved as well as Friends meetings? Volunteers who sign on with a complete understanding of what’s involved are happier, more willing to go the second mile, and more effective than people who get “roped” into helping. You need people who feel fulfilled and energized when working with kids, people who are serving in ways that honor their God-given gifts.

FaithWeaver Friends belongs to God. Be sure to “pray” volunteers into your program as well as recruit them. Are there people you think would make a great addition to your team? Ask God to give them a passion for helping before rushing at them with a sign-up sheet and pencil.

Have You Prayed? Ready to Get Started? Great!

You’ll need one leader for each Discovery Center you include in your program. Remember to fill both the elementary and preschool positions and, if possible, recruit two leaders for each center. That way they can team teach or alternate quarters.

Use the form on page 34 to list the names and contact information for your Discovery Center leaders and the one on page 35 to list your Circle of Friends leaders.

The job descriptions on pages 36 to 43 and 49 to 55 will help you identify and recruit leaders.

- **See page 36** for the director’s job description (page 49 for preschool director).
- **See pages 37-43** for elementary program leader job descriptions.
- **See pages 50-55** for preschool program leader job descriptions.
- **See page 57** for details about Registration and Key Coordinators.
- **See pages 58-60** for information you’ll want every Discovery Center leader to see.

Make photocopies of the appropriate pages for each of your volunteers. Put them into a folder and distribute these during your first training session or when you meet with each leader personally.

Parents are likelier to volunteer for a program if it directly benefits their children. So ask your kids’ parents (or grandparents) about volunteering. The role of Circle of Friends leader is a particularly appropriate one for busy parents and grandparents. A word of caution: Having parents as Circle of Friends leaders for their own children may not be the best arrangement. Evaluate carefully.

If volunteer turnout is less than you hoped for, consider rolling out your program in stages. Announce that you’ll begin with the elementary part of the program and then add preschool next quarter. Once people see how much fun Friends is and what an impact it has on the families and children of your church and community, they’ll be more receptive when you ask again about volunteering.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discovery Center</th>
<th>Leader’s Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
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<td>Director</td>
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<td>Opening &amp; Closing Celebrations Leader</td>
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<td>Games Leader</td>
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<td>Surprise Station Leader</td>
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<td>Preschool</td>
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<td>Director</td>
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<td>Gathering Time Leader</td>
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<td>Make-It Leader</td>
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<td>Play-It Leader</td>
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<td>Snack-It Café Leader</td>
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<td>Learn-It Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registration and Key Coordinator</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Circle of Friends Leaders

Use this chart for both elementary and preschool circle leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader’s Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Elementary/Preschool</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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FaithWeaver Friends Director

What an opportunity to serve others and impact kids’ lives for God! You’ll organize and direct FaithWeaver Friends, providing vision, offering affirmation, and serving the leaders who work with children.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a Friends director, it helps if you

- communicate clearly and easily with people,
- enjoy managing teams of people,
- feel comfortable recruiting people to serve in areas of their giftedness,
- are a good listener,
- enjoy working with children and those who serve them,
- are flexible and fun,
- rely on God for guidance and perspective, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As director, you’ll be responsible for

- leading (or arranging for someone to lead) training for leaders,
- planning and managing the ongoing calendar,
- assuring the high quality of meetings,
- serving as a liaison with your host church or facility manager,
- enthusiastically supporting the program and its staff,
- coaching and encouraging leaders,
- monitoring the spiritual growth of those in the program, and
- praying for those whose lives are touched by FaithWeaver Friends.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy directing Friends if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- helping others find meaningful service opportunities,
- managing people, or
- organizing ministries and projects.
Opening and Closing Celebrations Leader

You’re the “up front” leader, helping kids transition from their busy days into FaithWeaver Friends by leading a brief, fun, upbeat program. And you’ll help kids cement their Bible learning by having Circle of Friends leaders give keys and key chains at the Closing Celebration. Then you’ll affirm kids and volunteers with a benediction.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as an Opening and Closing Celebrations leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy entertaining and playing with children,
- are energetic and upbeat,
- maintain a positive attitude,
- can organize and motivate children, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As the Opening and Closing Celebrations leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- working with the director and/or Music & Memory leader to select and lead music,
- helping children present the Bible through a weekly Instant Drama,
- assisting the director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading the Opening and Closing Celebrations if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- leading children in fun activities and programs,
- emceeing other kinds of programs,
- leading worship, or
- public speaking or acting.
Games Leader

Kids love to play, and you’ll encourage lasting friendships to form in Circles of Friends as your enthusiasm prompts kids to join you in noncompetitive, relationship-building games.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a Games leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy playing games,
- like activity and are energetic,
- maintain a positive attitude,
- value the gift of play—whether you win or lose,
- value cooperation and teamwork,
- can organize and motivate children, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As a Games leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- leading kids in noncompetitive games,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point as you lead,
- cleaning up the game area after games are played,
- assisting the FaithWeaver Friends director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers in Friends.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading the Games Discovery Center if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- coaching or leading children in fun activities,
- creating games,
- teaching through athletics, or
- organizing and supervising teams of people.
Snack-It Café Leader

Children love being helpers and eating snacks! You’ll tap into those two natural instincts and connect them with a third idea: service projects. You won’t be making snacks; kids will do that. You’ll be making disciples as you help children serve one another.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a Snack-It Café leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy cooking and food preparation,
- can give clear directions to children,
- believe children can accomplish big things through cooperation,
- are accepting and supportive of children’s abilities, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities
As a Snack-It Café leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- staying current with kids’ food allergy information,
- coordinating food supplies for weekly snacks,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point as you lead,
- cleaning up the snack area after snacks are served,
- assisting the FaithWeaver Friends director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests
You’ll enjoy leading the Snack-It Café if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- preparing and serving food,
- maintaining a clean environment,
- working in a kitchen or restaurant, or
- organizing and supervising teams of people.
Projects-With-a-Purpose® Leader

The crafts and projects you help kids create will reinforce the Bible passage and Bible Point in tangible ways. You’ll get kids actively involved, and the projects kids make become discussion starters as kids carry them home or give them away.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a Projects-With-a-Purpose leader, it helps if you

- love God;
- enjoy leading projects and crafts;
- can give clear directions to children;
- are flexible and fun;
- are affirming to kids, reminding them that they’re making a difference;
- believe children can accomplish big things through cooperation;
- are accepting and supportive of children’s abilities; and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As a Projects-With-a-Purpose leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- preparing sample projects before weekly meetings,
- explaining the projects,
- encouraging children to carry out projects,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point as you lead,
- helping children create one-of-a-kind projects,
- assisting the FaithWeaver Friends director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading Projects-With-a-Purpose if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- science projects,
- missions projects,
- arts and crafts, or
- working with your hands.
Music & Memory Leader

Even “too cool” kids love music, so you’ll use music to help kids grow spiritually! Plus, some weeks you’ll help kids learn and understand key Bible verses. You’re helping kids hide God’s Word in their hearts!

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a Music & Memory leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy music and children,
- can give clear directions to children,
- believe children should understand and celebrate God’s Word,
- understand that “making a joyful noise” is more important than extracting a perfect performance from children,
- are accepting and supportive of children’s abilities, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As a Music & Memory leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point as you lead,
- learning the music and motions for six to eight songs each quarter,
- leading singing for weekly meetings,
- assisting the FaithWeaver Friends director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading Music & Memory if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- playing a musical instrument,
- directing or singing in your church choir,
- leading worship,
- creative Scripture memory, or
- acting or drama.
Surprise Station Leader

Today’s kids can quickly become bored. You’ll make sure FaithWeaver Friends is never boring by doing something unpredictable each week.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a Surprise Station leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy leading projects and crafts,
- can give clear directions to children,
- are flexible and fun,
- can build a sense of mystery and intrigue,
- like surprises,
- can recruit and introduce guests with great enthusiasm,
- believe children can accomplish big things through cooperation,
- are accepting and supportive of children’s abilities, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As a Surprise Station leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- inviting speakers to come,
- encouraging children to participate in surprises,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point as you lead,
- assisting the Friends director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading the Surprise Station if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- surprise parties,
- drama and music,
- delighting children and adults, or
- laughing.
Circle of Friends Leader

FaithWeaver Friends is all about relationships, and you’re the person who can best encourage kids to grow in their relationships with one another, their families, yourself, and Jesus.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a Circle of Friends leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy being with children,
- can be reflective and thoughtful,
- can write encouraging and affirming comments,
- are comfortable talking with children about Jesus and the Christian faith,
- believe children can understand and live God’s Word,
- are accepting and supportive of children,
- model God’s love in everything you say and do, and
- like to laugh and have fun.

Responsibilities

As a Circle of Friends leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- reinforcing weekly Bible Points as you lead,
- accompanying your Circle to the Discovery Centers,
- joining in activities with your Circle,
- encouraging the kids in your Circle,
- actively seeking to grow spiritually and in your leadership skills,
- assisting Discovery Center leaders as needed,
- watching for opportunities to give keys to kids,
- writing encouraging notes in kids’ faith journals,
- picking up keys to give during the Closing Celebration, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy serving as a Circle of Friends leader if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- caring for and interacting with children,
- helping and serving others,
- praying for others, or
- listening to others.
Recruiting Circle of Friends Leaders

After you’ve filled your roster of Discovery Center leaders, you’ll need Circle of Friends leaders. This is an important role in your program! Circle of Friends leaders have a great deal of contact with children and will be reading kids’ faith journals.

That means your Circle of Friends leaders will make or break the Friends experience for kids in their Circles. So pick wisely, and always include the following filters when considering whom to recruit:

Circle leaders must…

- love God,
- love kids, and
- be trainable and willing to learn and develop their skills.

You’re looking for people who are already “wired” for the job: They value children and see kids as important. They love God and want to share God’s love. And they’re willing to learn new skills to be effective in their roles.

Circle of Friends leaders don’t have to prepare anything; they simply come each day and join in the fun. But Circle of Friends leaders have a vital job to do: focusing on the kids in their Circles and making sure children grow in their relationships with one another, their Circle leaders, and Jesus.

Circle leaders lead discussions, help settle conflicts, ask challenging questions, listen to stories and answers, and buy cookies during Girl Scout cookie season and gift wrapping during school fundraisers.

Encourage Circle leaders to attend training meetings. These guidelines will help you identify top-notch Circle of Friends leaders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Circle of Friends leader <strong>is</strong></th>
<th>A Circle of Friends leader <strong>isn’t</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a friend and a helper.</td>
<td>the boss or the teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>someone who offers kids choices.</td>
<td>someone who makes all the decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone who asks questions.</td>
<td>someone who gives all the answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone who encourages kids.</td>
<td>someone who yells at kids or puts them down.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You’ll need one Circle of Friends leader for every five kids who attend regularly. Don’t yet know how many kids to expect? Estimate high—you’ll be surprised how quickly your program grows once it’s up and running!

Remember to recruit Circle of Friends leaders for your preschool program, too! These Circle leaders will play with and pray for children, help kids complete projects, and keep Circles organized and together.

Use the chart on page 35 to keep track of the people who’ve signed up to serve in this important capacity. Provide all your Circle leaders with photocopies of pages 45 to 48 so they’ll know exactly what’s expected of them, how to handle challenges, and how to assign roles to children.
For Circle of Friends Leaders Only

What’s a Circle of Friends leader?
If you’ve been asked to serve as a Circle of Friends leader, you’ve met two important qualifications: You love the Lord, and you love kids.

During FaithWeaver Friends, you’ll visit different Discovery Centers with a small group of kids. You won’t prepare lessons; you get to experience them alongside your kids and then help children debrief what happened as you lead discussions.

You’ll also read your kids’ faith journals and comment on what you find there. It’s a rare privilege to share in the faith development and inner life of children.

You’ll get training that helps you develop as an effective leader and listener. Celebrate the joy of serving God in this personal, impactful way!

Here’s some help with one important part of being a Circle of Friends leader: knowing what to say when talking with your kids!

When talking with kids,

**say**
- Let’s keep moving so we can do as many fun activities as possible.
- Listen carefully so you’ll know what to do next.
- Stay with our Circle of Friends; we need your help in this activity!
- That’s a unique way of doing things! How did you think of that? Let’s try it this way.
- It’s important that we all follow the instructions and work together as a team.
- Please move over here so you can see better.

**don’t say**
- Stop talking and get back to work.
- Be quiet and listen!
- Don’t run around the room.
- You’re doing it wrong!
- Don’t do that!
- Stay out of that area!

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How to Handle Challenges in Your Circle

Usually things will go smoothly in your Circle, but occasionally you may face a challenge. Here’s advice on how to handle common challenges.

**My Circle won’t stay together.**

Encourage your Travel Coordinator to come up with creative ways to travel. Ask your Cheerleader to come up with cheers to say as you travel.

**Older kids complain about being with younger ones.**

Highlight their helping role. Encourage them to help younger kids with crafts and activities. Acknowledge them by telling younger kids, “[Name of older child] is really good at that. Why don’t you ask him [or her] to help?” And allow time for this change to become comfortable.

**I have a clique in my Circle.**

Cliques can make Circles unhappy for outsiders. Pair kids with partners they don’t know very well during games and crafts to break down cliques.

**One Circle member won’t participate.**

Help shy children feel welcome by calling them by name often and asking them questions directly. Respond to their questions with a smile and an encouraging statement. Try giving children special jobs. For example, ask a child to find a place for your Circle to sit at each Discovery Center. If someone doesn’t want to participate in games, that’s OK. Let children rest until they’re ready to join in. Chances are, when kids see how much fun everyone else is having, they’ll want to play too. Be generous; let kids have an “off night” now and then.

**Two kids in my Circle don’t get along.**

Quietly take the two children aside and tell them that, though they don’t have to be best friends, they do have to get along. Emphasize the quarter’s fruit of the Spirit at times like these!

**I have an overly active child.**

Pair up this child with yourself during partner activities, and suggest that he or she sit with you during quiet times. Try to make sitting still a game by saying, “Let’s see how long you can sit still without interrupting. I’m timing you. Ready? Go!” If the child is really uncontrollable, ask your director if you could have an assistant leader.

With a little patience and humor, you and your Circle of Friends will have a valuable, relationship-building experience at FaithWeaver Friends!
Who’s Who in the Circle of Friends?

During your first few weeks together each quarter, have your kids choose Circle of Friends jobs. Each child will have one of the jobs listed in the chart below.

- If your Circle has fewer than five kids, some kids may have more than one job.
- If your Circle has more than five kids, let kids share jobs.
- If kids can’t agree on who should perform each job, tell them that everyone can take turns doing all the jobs. Simply rotate the jobs.

Kids love having special jobs! Encourage them to fulfill their roles well, and give them chances to do so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOBS</th>
<th>DUTIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reader</td>
<td>■ reads Bible passages aloud</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Coordinator</td>
<td>■ chooses action ideas for traveling between Discovery Centers (such as shuffling, skipping, hopping, galloping, marching, or walking)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ helps monitor the weekly schedule to let the Circle of Friends leader know what’s coming next</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials Manager</td>
<td>■ hands out and collects supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ passes out and collects faith journals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ carries the Circle’s storage tote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheerleader</td>
<td>■ smiles and makes people happy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ encourages everyone to get involved in all activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prayer Person</td>
<td>■ isn’t afraid to pray aloud</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ makes sure the group takes time to pray each day at the Snack-It Café</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ leads or opens prayer times</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Tip

Each Circle of Friends will need a tote in which to carry its faith journals, a pair of safety scissors, pens, pencils, and markers. Plastic grocery bags work well.

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What Do Circle of Friends Leaders Do at Each Discovery Center?

The **Opening Celebration** is where kids reconnect after a week apart. They sing upbeat songs, celebrate a Wacky Holiday, and act out a Bible skit. Your job at the Opening Celebration is to

- arrive 15 minutes early;
- greet your Circle members as they come to where your Circle will sit;
- lead as your Circle members open faith journals and fill out and discuss the “This Week Was” box;
- participate when asked to have your Circle act out the Bible passage;
- follow the motions and sing aloud; and
- remember that if you get involved, your kids will too!

The **Surprise Station** is where kids are delighted with unpredictable activities. Your job at the Surprise Station is to

- ask how you can help out,
- keep your Circle together until you receive other directions, and
- lead discussion questions as directed. You’ll find discussion questions in your FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide.

**Projects-With-a-Purpose** is where kids make cool crafts. Your job at Projects-With-a-Purpose is to

- help your Circle listen carefully to instructions,
- help kids make their crafts (when they need help),
- help clean up your area before leaving, and
- lead discussion questions as directed. You’ll find discussion questions in your FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide.

The **Games** Discovery Center is where kids play team-building games. Your job at Games is to

- help your Circle listen carefully to instructions,
- perform any tasks the Games leader assigns to you,
- participate and cheer on your Circle members as they participate, and
- lead discussion questions as directed. You’ll find discussion questions in your FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide.

The **Snack-It Café** is where children make and enjoy tasty snacks. Your job at Snack-It Café is to

- help your Circle listen carefully to instructions,
- help kids clean up your area before leaving, and
- lead discussion questions as directed. You’ll find discussion questions in your FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide.

**Music & Memory** is where children make God-honoring, fun, upbeat music and take part in memorable Bible-learning activities. Your job at Music & Memory is to

- encourage kids to listen carefully to instructions,
- join your Circle in participating in the music or activities, and
- lead kids in discussion when applicable. You’ll find discussion questions in your FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guide.
FaithWeaver Friends
Preschool Director

What an opportunity to serve others and impact kids’ lives for God! You’ll organize and direct FaithWeaver Friends Preschool, providing vision, offering affirmation, and serving the leaders who work with children.

To enjoy your role and be a great success as a Friends Preschool director, it helps if you
- love God,
- enjoy working with young children,
- delight in organization and administration,
- enjoy a fast-paced and exciting atmosphere,
- find joy in serving others,
- are flexible and fun,
- are a capable and proactive communicator,
- are a good listener,
- can encourage a strong team environment,
- work closely with parents, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities
As a Friends Preschool director, you’ll be responsible for
- training your volunteers and informing them of their job responsibilities and the expectations they’re to meet,
- planning and managing the ongoing calendar and coordinating it with the elementary program’s calendar, if applicable,
- ordering quarterly Friends Preschool supplies or coordinating supply ordering with the elementary director,
- assuring the high quality of meetings,
- working as a liaison with your host church or facility manager,
- cheering on and enthusiastically supporting your staff,
- providing ongoing training for and communicating with your leaders,
- monitoring the spiritual growth of those in the program, and
- praying for those whose lives are touched by Friends.

Related Interests
You’ll enjoy directing a Friends Preschool program if you enjoy any of the following activities:
- helping others find meaningful service opportunities,
- managing people and delegating responsibilities,
- organizing ministries and projects, or
- serving preschoolers and their families.
Gathering Time Leader

Each week preschoolers will meet with a lovable canine puppet named Theophilus the FaithRetriever™ who’ll help your children experience the week’s Bible Point. You’re Theo’s adult friend and a key part of each puppet play.

You’ll greet children warmly and then help them call their friend Theo. Using the scripts found in the FaithWeaver Friends Preschool Director & Storyteller Guide and the songs and sound effects on the FaithWeaver Friends Preschool Sound Effects & Songs CD, you and the Theo puppeteer will keep kids enthralled.

You’ll also help Circle leaders distribute weekly Bible Story Dogtags and stickers.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a Gathering Time leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy entertaining and interacting with preschoolers,
- like working with puppets,
- are energetic and upbeat,
- maintain a positive attitude,
- can organize and motivate children, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As the Gathering Time leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- identifying and working with a puppeteer who’ll play the part of Theo,
- assisting the Friends director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading the Gathering Time if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- leading children in fun activities and programs,
- working in puppet ministry, or
- public speaking or acting.
Make-It Leader

You’ll turn fun time into fun learning time as you gather preschoolers and help them create simple crafts that reinforce weekly Bible passages and Bible Points.

To enjoy your role and guarantee success as a Make-It leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy leading arts and crafts,
- can give clear directions to children,
- are creative and fun-loving,
- accept kids’ artistic abilities (realizing the fun is in the process),
- are patient while working with groups of children, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As a Make-It Discovery Center leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- preparing sample projects before weekly meetings,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point as you lead,
- assisting children to develop and use fine motor skills to create one-of-a-kind projects,
- assisting the FaithWeaver Friends Preschool director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading Make-It if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- arts and crafts,
- working with your hands,
- stimulating young children’s imaginations, or
- encouraging artistic expressions and innovative approaches.
Play-It Leader

Preschoolers explore their world through play, and you’ll tap into that enthusiasm to help children build friendship skills and reinforce the weekly Bible passage and Bible Point.

To enjoy your role and guarantee success as a Play-It leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy playing games,
- like activity and are energetic,
- maintain a positive attitude,
- can organize and motivate young children,
- are patient while working with groups of children, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As a Play-It Discovery Center leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- leading kids in structured and unstructured play,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point,
- cleaning up the Play-It area after the activities are finished,
- assisting the FaithWeaver Friends Preschool director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers in Friends.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading Play-It if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- leading or encouraging young children in fun activities;
- valuing the gift and purpose of play;
- teaching the skills of cooperation, teamwork, and sharing; or
- encouraging innovation and free expression.
Snack-It Café Leader

Preschoolers love snacks and the process of making them! You’ll help little ones create simple, tasty snacks that reinforce the weekly Bible Point or Bible passage.

To enjoy your role and guarantee success as a Snack-It Cafe leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy cooking and food preparation,
- have the ability to give clear directions to young children,
- believe children can accomplish big things through help and cooperation,
- are accepting and supportive of preschoolers’ abilities, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As a Snack-It Café Discovery Center leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- coordinating food supplies for weekly snacks,
- staying current with kids’ food allergy information,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point as you lead,
- cleaning up the snack area after snacks are served,
- assisting the FaithWeaver Friends Preschool director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading Snack-It Café if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- preparing and serving food,
- maintaining a clean environment,
- encouraging young children’s accomplishments and abilities, or
- organizing and supervising teams of people.

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Learn-It Leader

At FaithWeaver Friends Preschool, you’ll turn story time into Bible-learning time by sharing active, child-friendly passages that fascinate preschoolers and make Bible learning stick.

To enjoy your role and guarantee success as a Learn-It leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- enjoy dramatic storytelling,
- relish a fast-paced and exciting atmosphere,
- are flexible and fun,
- are accepting and supportive of preschoolers’ abilities,
- can help children understand words and ideas in each Bible passage,
- are a good listener and can encourage children to talk, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities

As a Learn-it Discovery Center leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- collecting necessary supplies,
- encouraging children to participate in dramatic activities,
- reinforcing the weekly Bible Point as you lead,
- assisting the Friends Preschool director as needed, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy leading Learn-It if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- drama and music,
- delighting young children and adults,
- laughing,
- storytelling, or
- encouraging imaginations and pretending.
Preschool Circle of Friends Leader

A preschooler’s world is made up of relationships. You’ll encourage kids to develop friendship skills, help preschoolers feel safe, and guide children into relationships with one another and Jesus.

To enjoy your role as a Preschool Circle of Friends leader, it helps if you

- love God,
- commit to a full quarter of FaithWeaver Friends Preschool,
- are enthusiastic and positive,
- are comfortable encouraging young children to explore and take the lead,
- are open to new ways of accommodating different learning styles,
- are willing to let children make “mistakes” as they work and play,
- encourage children to be positive about themselves and others,
- listen to children and ask questions,
- help children make personal connections with Bible truths,
- work closely with parents,
- learn children’s names and speak in a gentle tone, and
- rejoice in kids’ accomplishments.

Responsibilities

As a Preschool Circle of Friends leader, you’ll be responsible for

- attending scheduled leader training,
- reinforcing weekly Bible Points as you lead,
- accompanying your Circle of Friends to the Discovery Centers,
- joining in activities with your Circle,
- encouraging the kids in your Circle,
- actively seeking to grow spiritually and in your leadership skills,
- assisting Discovery Center leaders as needed,
- writing kids’ thoughts about their artwork on their take-home pages, and
- praying for the children and volunteers you serve.

Related Interests

You’ll enjoy serving as a Preschool Circle of Friends leader if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- caring for and interacting with preschoolers,
- helping and serving others,
- praying for others, or
- listening to others.
What’s a Circle Leader for Preschoolers?

During FaithWeaver Friends, you’ll visit different Discovery Centers with a small group of preschoolers. You don’t have to “teach”; instead, you’ll experience the activities alongside your children.

Your role is to love, encourage, and enjoy the children in your Circle. If you’ve never worked with preschoolers before, the following tips will help you:

- Learn children’s names. Call children by name often.
- You’ll have 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds in your Circle. There are big differences in their motor skills (such as cutting and coloring), so help children work at their own pace. Encourage 5-year-olds to help younger children when possible.
- Make eye contact with preschoolers when you speak to them. Kneel or sit on the floor a lot.
- Offer children choices. Ask, “Would you like to pretend you’re happy or sad?” Don’t ask, “What do you want to do?” or children may decide that they want to do an activity that’s unavailable or inappropriate.

As a Circle Leader for Preschoolers, you’ll be expected to...

- arrive 15 minutes early each day so you’re there to greet children as they arrive. Your welcoming smile will bring smiles to anxious faces!
- greet each child by name. Help children put on their name badges each day.
- keep track of your Circle members’ My Bible Memories Books and Preschool Activity Stickers sheets. Store these in a tote bag, and place the bag in a convenient location in your classroom or church.
- sit with your Circle during group activities.
- accompany children to Discovery Centers.
- repeat the weekly Bible Point often. The more children hear or say the Bible Point, the more likely they are to remember it and apply it to their lives.
- make sure all children are accounted for before leaving a Discovery Center! Be sure children hold hands or a rope as you travel. If a child lags behind, remind him or her to stay with the Circle. You may want to walk behind your Circle so that you can keep all the children in view and avoid traveling too fast.
- report any potential discipline problems to your director. He or she will help you handle problems appropriately.
- assist children with “journaling” by writing down their comments.
- collect children’s name badges after each day’s journaling.
- help children prepare their Bible Friends Dogtags for taking home.
- help children remember to take home their projects and crafts.
- release children only to a designated parent or caregiver. If an unfamiliar adult comes to pick up a child, refer the adult to the director.
- assist the director with cleanup.
Registration and Key Coordinator

You’ll think ahead to make sure an adequate number of keys are available, that the order for next quarter has been sent, and that registration records are up-to-date and organized.

To enjoy your role and be wildly successful as a FaithWeaver Friends Registration and Key Coordinator, it helps if you

- communicate clearly and easily with people,
- pay close attention to details,
- are organized,
- enjoy managing processes,
- feel comfortable asking for help if you need it,
- meet deadlines with a cheerful spirit,
- enjoy working with children and those who serve them,
- are flexible and fun,
- rely on God for guidance and perspective, and
- model God’s love in everything you say and do.

Responsibilities
As Friends Registration and Key Coordinator, you’ll be responsible for

- monitoring and ordering Friends keys and key chains,
- keeping an eye on the current and upcoming calendars so you know what keys you’ll need,
- stocking keys that will be needed for upcoming weeks,
- ensuring that kids receive keys in a timely manner,
- enthusiastically supporting the program and its staff, and
- praying for those whose lives are touched by Friends.

Related Interests
You’ll enjoy serving as a Registration and Key Coordinator if you enjoy any of the following activities:

- organizing programs and ministries or
- managing people.
For All Discovery Center Leaders

How to use Discovery Center discussion questions

Each week you’ll find discussion questions to ask after, or as, kids are completing the activity, snack, or craft.

These questions help children apply what they’ve learned. For kids who are “talkers,” discussion is a natural way for them to process what they’ve experienced. And even introverted or shy kids will get involved if you follow this simple, four-step process:

1. **Help Circle leaders lead discussions.** Each activity you lead includes discussion questions. Circle leaders will find these same questions—plus bonus questions that are not in your Discovery Center Leader Guide—in their FaithWeaver Friends Leader Guides. When Circles finish the activity, ask kids to “circle up” with their leaders and sit knee to knee. Have leaders then start asking the questions and facilitating discussions within their Circles. You won’t ask kids the questions or direct the discussions. Letting leaders hold discussions within their own Circles gives more kids the chance to talk and gives Circle leaders a chance to minister to their kids.

2. **Keep things on track.** As Circles talk, circulate around the room and listen in. If a Circle leader is struggling to keep the discussion focused, briefly join and help redirect the discussion. But don’t jump in too quickly; a leader may let a discussion drift from the point if doing so has a purpose.

3. **Give countdowns.** It’s your job to keep things on schedule. When it’s three minutes before Circles rotate, let Circle leaders know with a quick word or a prearranged signal (a brief sounding of the train whistle, for instance). You’ll help leaders pace discussions in their Circles.

4. **Sum up.** Restating the Bible Point is important! Before Circles rotate out of your Discovery Center, be sure to clearly say the Bible Point again. And if the evangelism moment is in your Discovery Center, allow time to warmly invite children to talk with you or their Circle leaders about a relationship with Jesus.
Dear Volunteer,

Thanks for helping with our FaithWeaver Friends program!

This is an overview of the Friends program; a quick snapshot that lets you see how the program is organized, how all the pieces fit together, and exactly where you fit in.

So please take a few moments to read these pages thoroughly. They’re your “guided tour” of FaithWeaver Friends!

FaithWeaver Friends is a Sunday school curriculum that works great with FaithWeaver NOW and KidsOwn Worship. Each week, all three programs cover the same Bible passage. Covering the same passage and Bible truth three times, in three different ways, has a powerful impact on children—and their families!

Now, let the tour begin!

The Big Picture—
for Elementary FaithWeaver Friends

FaithWeaver Friends will do three things in your church:

1. Help your kids grow in their relationship with Jesus.
2. Offer practical, child-friendly ways for children to put their faith into action.
3. Encourage new children to enter your children’s ministry.

And all three goals are met by the power of relationships.

At Friends each child is placed in a small group (Circle of Friends). That’s because church can be a frightening place to children. Kids are often expected to open up to adults they hardly know. Kids may not remember where to find the bathroom. They’re afraid they won’t know how to answer questions.

But when you place children in a small group with a Circle of Friends leader, they feel safe. There’s a friendly grown-up (or mature teenager) who knows their names, who smiles when they arrive each week, and who’s glad to see them. Friends begins to feel like home.

Circles of Friends put the “friend” in FaithWeaver Friends, and that makes all the difference in the world to children.

The first place kids gather is the Opening Celebration. That’s where adults and kids sing and celebrate a Wacky Holiday in a fun way.

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Circles of Friends put the “friend” in FaithWeaver Friends, and that makes all the difference in the world to children.

The first place kids gather is the Opening Celebration. That’s where adults and kids sing and experience the day’s Bible passage. It’s also a time for announcements and for Circles of Friends to huddle up and talk about how the week went for everyone.

Circles of Friends then rotate from one Discovery Center to the next, taking part in meaningful and fun activities, snacks, and experiences that help them apply Bible truths to their daily lives. There are five Discovery Centers in all.

Each Discovery Center lasts 15 minutes, and Discovery Center leaders present the same activity to all the Circles of Friends that rotate through. How many times Discovery Center leaders present the activity depends on the number of kids in your program.
Then it’s time for journaling. That’s when kids write in their faith journals. It’s a chance for kids to reflect on the day’s Bible lesson and apply that Bible truth to their lives.

The Closing Celebration is where the program wraps up with a closing blessing. It’s also a good place to distribute items intended to travel home with children.

The Big Picture—
for Preschool FaithWeaver Friends

You’ll place preschoolers in small-group Circles of Friends too. And your preschoolers will enjoy the fun and friendships in Circles of Friends for the same reasons older children will.

If your preschool Friends program has an elementary-age component, preschoolers join their older friends in the Opening Celebration. But when it’s time to hear the Bible passage, preschoolers and their leaders go to their own Gathering Time. That’s where preschoolers help a puppy puppet named Theophilus the FaithRetriever™ experience the Bible.

Preschoolers have their own age-appropriate Discovery Centers to explore. There are four preschool Discovery Centers.

Preschoolers have their own journals too! Kids do artwork related to the Bible passage in their My Bible Memories Books as Circle leaders jot down what children say about their masterpieces. That way, when drawings get home, leaders’ notes help parents know what their children were thinking and feeling.

Preschoolers can rejoin the elementary kids for the Closing Celebration, or they can stay together for their own closing. It’s up to you.

That’s the big picture. Of course, your program may differ. Your FaithWeaver Friends director will give you the exact details.

Your Part in FaithWeaver Friends

Everyone who volunteers at Friends has a special job to do, but there are a few things everyone does.

Your director will give you the training you need to be successful in your specific role, but here’s what you can be doing right away:

**Pray.** Ask God to bless your program, the kids you serve, and their families—and also your fellow volunteers!

**Love God.** At Friends you’ll see children grow in relationship with Jesus, with one another, and with adult leaders. You’ll be modeling what it means to live out a Christian faith.

**Love kids.** God places a tremendous value on children, and Friends does, too. You’ll have ample opportunities to get to know children and encourage them to grow in their Christian faith.

**Grow in your skills.** You’ll be invited to attend periodic training sessions. Take advantage of them! You’ll sharpen your skills and be an even better servant to the children God has entrusted to you.

Your Friends director has even more information for you about your role, as well as helpful tips for becoming a super-successful Friends volunteer.

Thanks again for serving at FaithWeaver Friends. You’re making a difference in kids’ lives that will last a lifetime!
How to Promote FaithWeaver Friends®

You’ve planned, prepared, and recruited and trained leaders. You have everything you need in place—except kids.

Now what?

How you publicize Friends will determine what kind of kids you attract. Children who will attend your program fall into three basic categories:

- churched kids from your church,
- churched kids from other churches, and
- unchurched kids.

If you value outreach and evangelism, you’ll want to attract unchurched kids. Or you may choose to launch Friends with your church kids and then reach out from there. Deciding up front lets you target your publicity.

No matter which kids you want to reach, here are three things to keep in mind:

Start early. Participating in Friends requires a commitment on the part of children and their parents. Allow for about three months of promotion, building to the kickoff date.

Realize you’re competing for a very limited resource: time—both the time of kids and the time of their parents who’ll fit Friends into the family calendar.

Stress the benefits of FaithWeaver Friends. Parents already understand what soccer, music lessons, scouts, and other extracurricular activities offer to their kids, but Friends is new. As you explain the program, talk about its benefits for kids and families. See the sample news release on page 64 for a quick summary of points to stress.

With those items in mind, here’s how to connect with the three different kind of kids you can invite to Friends.

Reaching Kids From Your Church

Use the publicity items described below to get parents and kids in your church excited about FaithWeaver Friends and signed up for the very first week.

Parents’ letter—Use this letter to contact the parents of every child from the age of 3 (if you’re doing the preschool program) through fifth grade. If possible, personalize letters. Sign letters by hand. Make sure parents and kids feel invited to participate. Consider going the second mile and hosting an ice-cream party/informational meeting where you can answer questions and give more information.

Pulpit support—Ask your pastor to announce the program and give it plenty of “air time.” Ask for an active endorsement, and if possible use the “FaithWeaver Friends Church Publicity Skit” (p. 66) during your worship time.

The FaithWeaver Friends “If ” Game—Make copies of page 65 and give them to the parents of elementary-age children in your church. Tuck it into your parents’ letter or as a bulletin stuffer on the day your pastor makes an announcement. As families play the game, they’ll get a taste of the relationship-building fun they’ll have at Friends!

Bulletin inserts—Distribute information to everyone who attends your church. Simply drop in your church’s information, photocopy, and slip the copies into your church bulletins.
**Getting Started With FaithWeaver Friends**

**Reaching Kids From Other Churches**

Expand your ministry by inviting kids from other congregations to join your Friends program.

Begin by meeting with their church leadership and making sure your invitation moves through the proper channels. Offer the list of options above and suggest that the neighboring congregations order appropriate publicity materials for their own campaign.

Suggest that they also recruit volunteers to help staff the program as well!

**Reaching Unchurched Kids**

The most effective way to reach unchurched kids is by encouraging your Friends kids to invite unchurched acquaintances and for parents of children in the program to offer to take their neighbors’ kids.

Unchurched kids won’t be attracted to the idea of “Christian growth,” so emphasize the fun of Friends meetings. Talk about the games, snacks, crafts, and music. The spiritual growth will happen as unchurched kids are exposed to caring, Christ-like adults and kids who love God.

But be aware that unchurched kids don’t know the “church” rules. They may run through your building, leave the bathrooms a mess, scuff the floors, kick the walls, or use language that doesn’t honor God. They won’t necessarily respect church buildings.

But why are you hosting a FaithWeaver Friends program? If it’s to reach out, any extra work created by having nonbelieving kids on site is more than offset by the chance to present the gospel to kids who need to hear it.

To reach the community, place posters in local libraries, restaurants, grocery stores, self-service laundries, parks, recreation centers, banks, shopping malls, and schools. Be sure to get permission before posting the fliers. Ask church members who own businesses in your community to post fliers at their businesses. They may suggest additional business owners you can contact as well.

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**Tip**

Think ahead about publicity! After your program launches, ask a photographer (a volunteer with experience from your church will work) to stop by regularly to take slides or videos. Use the images to help spread the word about Friends by showing them to Sunday school classes or at Sunday morning worship services.

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**Image**

Two young girls are shown working on a project together. 

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62 Getting Started With FaithWeaver Friends
Letter to Invite Families
Personalize this letter, and use it to invite parents in your church to attend an informational meeting about FaithWeaver Friends.

Mrs. Jane Doe
123 Anytown Ln.
Yourtown, IN 47000

Dear Jane,
If your family calendar is like mine, it’s packed. Church meetings; school programs; and child-related parties, music lessons, and after-school activities—I can hardly get the entire family together for dinner! So you look carefully at every new program, even those offered at church. You want to know…

- What will my child gain by attending?
- Will it help my child grow in his or her relationship with Jesus?
- Will my child want to do it, week after week?

FaithWeaver Friends is an exciting new Sunday school program at [First Christian], and it’s worth adding to your family calendar!
Here’s why...
At Friends kids connect their Christian faith with real life. Your child will enjoy journaling, crafts, projects, games, and even preparing snacks to share with friends. And each week your child will apply what’s being learned by completing a “Weekly Challenge.” This challenge is often a service project to be completed at home, so your child will learn to serve others in a practical way!
And because Friends is fun, your child will look forward to coming week after week! FaithWeaver Friends is where friends and fun come together!
I’d love to tell you more and get your family on board for Friends. We’ll have an informational meeting and ice-cream party on [Sunday, July 16, at 6:00 p.m.]. Bring your family and join me for make-’em-yourself banana splits and a brief overview of FaithWeaver Friends!
The ice cream is provided, but please call the church office at [555-1212] (or me at [555-3434]) to reserve your family’s place at the [July 16] meeting. I want to make sure I have enough ice cream and toppings!

Sincerely,

[Your Legible Signature]

FaithWeaver Friends Director

P.S. Remember: Call [555-1212] now to reserve your family’s spot at the [July 16th] ice-cream party and Friends overview!
FaithWeaver Friends Sample News Release

Adapt the information in this sample news release to fit your Friends program. Then submit typed, double-spaced copies to your local newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations. Check first with them for any other specific requirements regarding news releases.

[Name of Church] Invites Children to FaithWeaver Friends—Where Fun and Friends Come Together!

“We’re rolling out an entirely new Sunday school,” says [your Friends director’s name]. “FaithWeaver Friends is a family-friendly weekly program for kids age 3 through fifth grade. Every [day of your program] between [start and end time of program], we’ll sing upbeat songs, play cooperative games, make tasty treats, create special projects, and explore the Bible in wild and wacky ways. It’s great fun, and if you’re a kid, you’re invited!”

FaithWeaver Friends runs throughout the school year, and enrollment for this quarter is open now. For information, call [church phone number].
The FaithWeaver Friends “If” Game

The 10-minutes-per-day game that helps you know, understand, and love your family more than ever!

Play at dinnertime, bedtime, or any other family gathering.
Take turns answering one question. You have enough questions for an entire month!

Try to predict what your family members will say.
Ask questions about answers that surprise you. Find out about the people you live with!

1. If you’d been one of the wise men, what present would you have brought to Jesus?
2. If you could instantly go anywhere in the world right now, where would you go?
3. If you could be the hero in any movie you’ve ever seen, what movie would you pick?
4. If you could have seen Jesus perform any one of his miracles, which miracle would you pick?
5. If you could pick any first name other than the one you have, what would it be?
6. If you could order your very favorite meal, what would you order?
7. If you were a superhero, what superpower would you most like to have?
8. If you could paint your room any color, what color would you pick?
9. If you could be in the front row of any concert, ever, what concert would it be?
10. If someone gave you a million dollars, what’s the first thing you’d do with it?
11. If your home caught fire and you could rescue just one belonging, what would it be?
12. If you could be the gold medalist in any Olympic sport, what sport would you choose?
13. If you could instantly be cured of ever again being afraid of one thing, what would it be?
14. If you could invite any Bible personality to join us for dinner, who would you pick?
15. If you had a million dollars to give away, where would you give the money?
16. If you could have invented anything, what would it be?
17. If you could have the perfect birthday party, what would it be like?
18. If a street were named after you, where would you like the street to be?
19. If you could instantly know all there is to know about any one subject, what would it be?
20. If you could be famous, what would you like to be famous for?
21. If your family could be either rich or happy, which would you choose, and why?
22. If you were in charge of the world for a day, what one thing would you change?
23. If you could ask your great-great-grandfather one question, what would it be?
24. If you created a family flag that featured an animal, what animal would you pick and why?
25. If you could have any animal for a pet, what would it be?
26. If you could ask God one thing, what would it be?
27. If you could do one kind deed for a neighbor, what would you do, and for whom?
28. If your favorite singer showed up to sing your favorite song, who would sing and what would the song be?
29. If you had to pick between a year without television and a year without books, which would you pick?
30. If you could pick anyone to invite to FaithWeaver Friends, whom would you invite?
FaithWeaver Friends Church Publicity Skit

A bored-looking CHILD sits in a chair, facing the audience. He holds a television remote control in his hand and occasionally raises it to change channels. When MOM enters, she’s carrying a piece of paper.

(Note: Make this skit ultra-easy on your actors by placing a script in the lap of the CHILD and having the MOM also carry one. No need to memorize the script!)

Mom: (Entering from stage left) So, what are you doing?
Child: Nothing.
Mom: How about playing some games?
Child: Nah.
Mom: Maybe you’d like to help Mrs. Johnson fix her fence today?
Child: Nah.
Mom: Here’s something that could be fun: Come out to the kitchen and whip up a tasty snack.
Child: No, thanks.
Mom: Want to make a craft?
Child: No.
Mom: Do a skit?
Child: Nope.
Mom: Play some music?
Child: Nah.
Mom: Learn an amazing illusion that will mystify your friends?
Child: Uh-uh.
Mom: Grow closer to Jesus in ways that will change your life forever?
Child: Maybe during the next commercial.
Mom: So your plan is to just sit there flipping channels all day? Honestly, sometimes you remind me of... of...
Child: Of Dad?
Mom: Yes, I mean no. OK, maybe a little. Look, what if you and some friends could go to a party where you played games, made crafts, ate snacks, performed fun skits, sang great songs, learned amazing things, met interesting people, and had so much fun that you didn’t even realize you were learning things and growing closer to Jesus?

Child: (For the first time looking at Mom) Could I invite Zack?
Mom: Absolutely.
Child: (Suspicious) This isn’t one of those sit-through-a-lecture things, is it? I get enough lectures at school.
Mom: Nope. This is one of those have-a-blast, loads-of-fun, hang-out-with-friends, laugh-‘til-your-sides-hurt, can’t-wait-until-you-come-back kind of things.
Child: That would be great! When?
Mom: [Fill in date of your first Friends meeting]—and every week after that. It’s called FaithWeaver Friends. This letter I got from church tells all about it.
Child: (Tosses remote in chair and runs toward stage right.) I’m gonna go call Zack right now. Thanks, Mom!
(Both exit stage right.)
Getting Started

Because children are allowed to enroll in FaithWeaver Friends at any time during the quarter, you’ll always have a trickle of registrations coming in. But there’s one time you can expect the trickle to be a full-blown flood: at your first meeting of the quarter.

Make the registration process painless by following these simple steps:

**Step one:** Preregister as many children as possible. As parents and children express an interest in Friends, distribute Registration Forms. Encourage families to complete and return them as quickly as possible. Give completed forms to the Registration and Key Coordinator promptly.

**Step two:** Inventory registrations. On the upper right-hand corner of your Registration Form, you’ll find a blank line. Here’s where you’ll use it! Label the completed forms with grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; do the same using 3-year-old, 4-year-old, 5-year-old (for 5-year-olds who have not yet attended kindergarten), and kindergartner.

Count how many kids have preregistered, and divide them into two groups: elementary-age children (grades 1–5) and preschool-age children. Check forms carefully—sometimes parents register more than one child on a form!

**Step three:** Decide how many Circles you’ll have. Each Circle will have no more than five kids and one adult or teenage leader. Divide the total number of preregistered elementary-age kids by five to discover how many elementary Circles you’ll have. Do the same with preschool registrations.

If you want to encourage kids to bring their friends, assign just three or four kids to each Circle.

Make certain you’ve recruited enough Circle of Friends leaders for this number of Circles plus the kids who will register at your first meeting or join shortly thereafter. If you have a few too many Circle leaders, don’t worry. You’ll need extra help until you’ve settled into a routine, and the less experienced volunteers can be mentored by veteran children’s workers.

**Step four:** Assign Circles of Friends. Photocopy the Circle of Friends Roster (page 69). You’ll need one form for every four Circles.

Assign a Circle of Friends leader to each Circle. It’s helpful to indicate whether the leader is an adult (A) or teenager (T).

Make four photocopies of each Roster: one for the Circle of Friends leader, one for your files, and two for the Registration and Key Coordinator.

**Preschool Circles of Friends**

Gather the registrations for ages 3, 4, 5, and kindergarten. Beginning with the 3-year-olds, assign one child to each Circle. Since each Circle has five spaces, you’ll double up some ages. It’s not a problem, but make sure to have a mixture of preschool ages in each Circle so that leaders can work with the younger children while 5-year-olds may be a bit more self-sufficient.

**Elementary Circles of Friends**

Gather the registrations for elementary ages. Beginning with the first graders, assign one child to each Circle. Depending on the number of children in your program, you may not be able to have a perfectly balanced Circle, with one
child from each grade. Don’t worry, just spread age levels among the Circles.

Remember, you aren’t required to group children in combined-age Circles, but we strongly recommend it because it works so well. Children, young and old alike, help one another while they’re together. Plus, you’ll minimize discipline problems because the diversity frees children from the need to compete with peers of the same age.

**Step five:** Complete an Alphabetical Master List—in pencil! Double-check to make sure you’ve assigned each participant to a Circle. Then write the name of each child’s leader on the Registration Form next to his or her name.

Alphabetize the registration forms, then transfer kids’ names and the names of their leaders to the Alphabetical Master List. Having the forms in alphabetical order will make life much easier when kids arrive for the first meeting. And having a master list will make it much easier for you and your staff to quickly know where everyone is supposed to be.

You completed the list in pencil because now that you’ve finished it, it’s time to stop and think about each Circle. Do you know anything about the kids in the Circle? If so, how do you think they’ll get along? If you don’t know many of the children, ask Sunday school teachers or parents to help you do the assigning. And assign kids to their Circles and leaders prayerfully. The relationships kids form will have a tremendous impact on their lives!

**How to Coast Through Your First Day’s Registration**

If you have a very small group, you probably don’t need to worry about all these preparations. But if you expect 40, 50, or more excited kids and their parents to all show up at once, you’ll be glad you’re ready!

- Set up and label three tables: Preregistered, Walk-in Registration, and Preschool Registration.
- Have plenty of pencils and pens available.
- Have blank Registration Forms available.
- Be sure each volunteer has a copy of the Alphabetical Master List.
- Ask the Registration and Key Coordinator to come at least half an hour before the first children are expected to arrive.
- Instruct Circle of Friends leaders to all be ready to greet children at least 15 minutes before children are expected to arrive.
- Review the Registration Forms again together. Answer any questions volunteers have, and offer the following hints:
  - Gently insist that parents completely fill out a Registration Form, including all health and emergency information, for each child. *This is very important!*
  - If families have both preschool and elementary children, encourage them to complete the preschool registration first and to introduce the preschooler to his or her Circle of Friends leader. This keeps preschoolers from getting fidgety while waiting for an older sibling.
  - Walk-in registrations take more time. As families are filling out Registration Forms, scan the Circle of Friends Roster for openings. This will help you place children more quickly.
FaithWeaver Friends
Registration Form

Name of child ___________________________ Date of birth ____________

Address ________________________________________________________________________________ Age ___

City ___________________________ State ____ ZIP ______________

Phone number (_____) ____________________________

Known allergies (including food) ____________________________________________________________

Special needs ____________________________________________________________

What else would you like us to know about your child?

Emergency Contact Person:

Parent/Guardian name _______________________________________________________________

Address (if different from child) __________________________________________________________

City ___________________________ State ____ ZIP ______________

Phone number (Home) (____) __________________________

Cellphone (____) __________________________

Phone number (Work) (____) __________________________ email ______________________________

We sometimes ask parents and guardians to share a special skill or hobby during a brief “show and tell”
time in the Surprise Station Discovery Center. Please help us by completing the following:

What are your hobbies?

What are job skills you might be able to demonstrate?

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Alphabetical Master List

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<th>Leader</th>
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Fees & Fundraising

Funding FaithWeaver Friends

FaithWeaver Friends programs are generally funded in one of two ways:

1. Families participating in Friends pay for everything.
2. The host church and participating families divide the cost.

As tempting as it may be to fund your Friends program from the church budget, we suggest you charge fees for your program. Here’s why:

Financial investment builds loyalty. Ask any coach or music teacher: When parents make even a modest financial investment in a child's program, it’s far likelier the child will attend frequently. It’s human nature to believe something is worth what we pay for it. If a program is absolutely free, it’s often treated as optional. After all, missing a few meetings now and then won’t cost anything.

That’s why encouraging families to make an upfront investment in Friends is a good idea. Even a modest outlay of cash builds loyalty and makes the meeting a priority on the family calendar.

Plus, this commitment makes Friends part of a family’s regular budget, and that adds significance to the program. You’ll “bullet-proof” your budget. If all your funding is dependent on one church, or the generosity of one foundation, you’re in trouble.

Church budgets may tighten. Foundations may choose to fund other organizations. The business underwriting your program may close or change priorities.

It’s far safer to be as self-funded as possible. Then, if you’re delivering a program that kids and their parents value, most funding will take care of itself.

Besides, it’s far easier to reduce fees if you discover you’re charging too much than to suddenly increase fees when external funding dries up.

You turn children into participants rather than passive recipients. When kids “pay” for Friends, it helps them feel they have a stake in the program. And that’s a good thing!

There’s no room for resentment among host church members. It’s likely that your Friends program will attract unchurched children and kids from other churches. That’s fine—until someone grumbles that it’s not fair for the host church to pick up the tab for kids who aren’t part of the church. Eliminate any opportunity for resentment by being self-funded.

Figuring Fees

A reasonable fee for each participant might include crafts and key chain and keys. Host churches generally cover the cost of the FaithWeaver Friends curriculum and incidentals.

The good news: To host Friends costs about two dollars per child per week. Collect a weekly fee of two dollars, and you’ll just about be breaking even. If you want to cover the snack materials and other supplies, consider adding a small quarterly registration fee as well.
You’ll have to decide whether to collect fees at the beginning of the year or divide each child’s total into quarterly payments.

We suggest you charge annual fees at the time of enrollment. When you do so, you

- can estimate how many participants to prepare for. This is especially important when shopping for food.
- know your approximate annual budget. This allows you to better take advantage of bulk purchases of food and supplies.
- cement the loyalty of parents who expect their children to participate because fees have already been paid.
- save yourself weekly or quarterly bookkeeping headaches.

As children enroll throughout the year, prorate fees for those children so that payment is equitable.

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**Start-Up Investment**

Before your first FaithWeaver Friends meeting, we recommend you find or purchase items such as storage bins, kitchen supplies, pencils, markers, and other stock items you’ll use again and again. They’re an investment—one that will offer high returns in ministry.

If you collected annual fees as kids enrolled, you’ll have plenty of money to get started. Following is a list of “stock” items to place in a cabinet where you can easily access them:

- keys and key chains
- Tube-a-loons™
- CD player
- overhead projector
- roll of newsprint
- Quarterly Drama, Sound Effects & Songs CD
- 8½x11-inch white paper
- pens
- pencils
- markers
- masking tape
- safety scissors
- staplers
- construction paper
- clear tape
- trash bags
- paper towels
- paper plates
- paper cups
- plastic utensils
- napkins
- plastic pitchers for water and drinks
- Bibles

And be sure to order faith journals each quarter! See your order form for specifics.
Fees and Fundraising FAQs

Is it OK to charge kids to come to church?

In the same way a “workman is worthy of his wage,” so a program that meets the ministry objectives of your church is worth supporting.

Parents don’t object to paying a reasonable fee for their children’s programs. Your FaithWeaver Friends fees are inexpensive compared to what parents pay for after-school care, soccer registrations, music lessons, scouting, and other enrichment programs. You needn’t apologize for charging a fee for Friends.

What if a child’s family can’t afford to pay for FaithWeaver Friends?

There are people in your church willing to fund scholarships for needy kids—if you ask. Make funding a scholarship part of your annual Friends kickoff, and provide envelopes so that people can give their donations anonymously. Ask your church accountant to determine if such gifts are tax-deductible for donors. And agree up front what circumstances must exist for a child to be eligible for scholarship money.

What about families with lots of kids? Won’t this get expensive?

We recommend the fees for additional children from a family be adjusted. Consider reducing the fee for the second and third children. Some programs cap the amount of fees a family has to pay.

What if a kid wants to quit? or a family moves away?

We suggest that fees be nonrefundable if a child wishes to stop coming. Explain that the money will be used to cover the cost of another child who needs a scholarship.

If a family moves out of your area, refund the unused fees and suggest the family find a Friends program near where they move. Group’s staff can help you locate another church participating in FaithWeaver Friends. Call 1-800-447-1070.

We’ve never charged for anything. How do I tell parents they’ll have to pay for their kids to come?

Clearly. Directly. And be sure to stress the benefits of participating: Children will grow in their faith; develop relationships with other children, with significant leaders, and with Jesus; and have loads of clean, wholesome fun, week after week!

Fundraising—Made Easy!

Most fundraisers require far more seed money and effort than the results justify. It’s not uncommon for a 400-person spaghetti dinner to net just a few hundred dollars.

The goal of a fundraiser is to raise as much money as possible with as little effort as possible. That’s your yardstick of success.

If along the way you also raise the visibility of FaithWeaver Friends, that’s great. And it’s even better if your fundraiser builds relationships among your team and kids.

If you decide to hold a fundraiser, consider these slightly offbeat winners.

Inventory Night

Call local stores and businesses that do annual inventory. Ask if your group can be paid to count boxer shorts, lug nuts, or other items. It’s often an all-night affair, but it’s over by the time the business opens the next day.
Do Something Big
A human checkerboard laid out in your parking lot. A life-size Monopoly game. A 24-hour rockathon or mall-walker relay at the local mall. Do something that captures the imagination (and a bit of local publicity) and pledges.

Community Garage Sale
It’s a lot of work, but everything you make is pure profit. Ask for donations, and put an ad in your local paper mentioning that it’s a 27-family sale. Use the church parking lot so that there’s plenty of parking.

Parable of the Talents
This requires an initial cash outlay, but it works! Give families, adults, and children five or ten dollars in cash, and challenge them to find ways to double or triple the money in 90 days. Examples: Buy bread ingredients, bake bread, and then sell it at a baked-goods sale; invest in a snow shovel and clear walks for a fee.

Auction Action
Ask local restaurants to donate gift certificates for meals. Explain that you’ll auction the certificates to the highest bidder to fund FaithWeaver Friends. Guarantee success by also selling tickets to the auction—one dollar buys access and a visit to your dessert bar.

Chocolate Goody Booth
Rent a booth at your local fair, and sell treats to fair-goers. But your success depends on getting a consistently high-quality product donated by church members and a booth that’s in an excellent location. If either piece is missing, cross this idea off your list. This fundraiser provides an excellent public-relations opportunity for your program.

The Virtual Fundraising Dinner
Send invitations to church members and friends inviting them to not attend a five-dollar-per-plate dinner that won’t be held. Include an impressive menu and an even more impressive speaker (since you won’t have to actually book the speaker, use anyone you’d like!) who won’t be speaking. Point out that no baby sitters will be required, no parking, and no tux rental. With all you’re saving people, a $5- or $10-per-plate donation seems cheap!

Go the extra mile: If your church has a website, post a breathless, it-was-stunning review of the nonevent.

Hour for Hour Swap
Offer your services as yard rakers, window washers, or car cleaners at a donor’s home—for one hour only. Work at an effective yet frenzied pace in exchange for one hour of the donor’s salary. Because most people don’t want to reveal what they earn, offer to work for an alternative flat fee of $20 per hour.

Sports Concessions
Contact your local college or professional sports stadium, and ask about staffing an appropriate concession booth during a game. You provide labor, and the concession vendor provides all materials.

Readathon
Ask people who value education to agree to pledge a certain amount for each book read by your kids during a week. Develop a suggested reading list, and have all books signed as “completed” by a parent. For extra credibility, require a simple book report.

A Friend Says:
“Just to let you know, FaithWeaver Friends is a huge success here! We started with about 60 kids, which was double our regular Wednesday night attendance for children. We are now at 153 kids and 44 adults and youth! It has created so much energy in our congregation. I wish I could take credit for it, but it is definitely a God thing!”
Promise Auction

Ask prominent members of your church or community to make promises that will be auctioned off to the highest bidder. It might be a promise to take someone to a sports event, to wear funny clothing, or to shave off half a mustache—anything someone would pay to see or do! Encourage volunteers to think up promises themselves, and make sure all promises are submitted in writing well before the event.

Fundraising Rules to Live (and Die) By

- Set a specific dollar goal, and talk about it frequently. Be sure everyone knows that number equals success.
- Make sure your fundraising chairperson is organized and enthusiastic.
- Keep it simple. Just because you can do something doesn’t mean you should.
- If possible, keep from having to go door-to-door selling anything. Profits tend to be small, and you expose kids to potential risk.
- Don’t damage relationships by taking on projects that are competitive or divisive.
- Make sure you have enough volunteers to pull off the activity without burning out anyone.
- Quick in, quick out. People lose interest in lengthy campaigns.
- Don’t do too many fundraisers. Step over the line, and parents will turn from allies to enemies.
- Make it fun for kids. And you.
- Tell us about projects that work well. Post your idea on Facebook at facebook.com/GroupChildrensMinistry. Others will benefit from your successful stories!
As the FaithWeaver Friends director, it’s your job to keep everyone in your program safe: physically safe, spiritually safe, and emotionally safe.

Does that mean it’s your problem if a child with a nut allergy eats a snack dripping with peanut butter? or a child runs into the parking lot and is hit by a car? or a volunteer sexually abuses a child?

If the accident was reasonably preventable, it is your problem—your problem to fix, your explanation to give, your apology letter to write. You may be the one who rides in the ambulance with an injured child or testifies in court after a child is abused.

The good news: With proper planning, most serious incidents are preventable. Which means now is the time to plan, so you can prevent serious mistakes before God’s children get hurt.

We suggest you consider joining Group’s Church Volunteer Central (ChurchVolunteerCentral.com). This service offers thousands of helpful articles; customizable tools such as interview forms, policies, and staff handbooks; online training; and discounted background checks for your volunteers.

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**Safety Is Important**

Even if nobody says it out loud, every person touched by Friends has a concern about safety.

*Parents wonder*...

- Will you make sure games and activities are safe before children participate?
- Are you ready to respond quickly and responsibly if an accident occurs?
- Do you screen and supervise your volunteers carefully?

*Kids wonder*...

- Can I feel safe with my Circle of Friends leader?
- Will you push me to do something that may get me hurt or make me feel silly?
- Are you caring—or careless? Do you love me enough to think ahead?

*Volunteers wonder*...

- Will someone be around to help me if a child gets sick or hurt?
- Will I be accused of wrongdoing because I spend time with children?
- Are you going to overwhelm me with more kids than I can handle?

*Your host church wonders*...

- Will you expose us to any undue liability?
- Could your actions result in poor publicity for the church?
- Are you maintaining our standard of providing excellent care for God’s kids?
The best way to reassure everyone that you’ll address these concerns is by providing clear safety policies, excellent safety training, and vigilant supervision. It’s an on-going process and definitely worth the effort.

And the process begins with you.

**Get Safety Training**

If you’re meeting in a church or other public-use facility, many safety concerns are already addressed.

Maybe.

Check over the portion of the building you’ll be using. Are there smoke detectors and fire extinguishers? Is a phone available, or are they all locked behind doors during the hours you’re meeting? Do kids have access to dangerous balconies or fire escapes? Is a first-aid kit available? The goal isn’t to become a paramedic. Rather, you want to learn to prevent accidents. Visit ChurchVolunteerCentral.com to learn more about safety training.

**Screen All Volunteers—including Yourself**

For the protection of the children, you must check anyone who works in children’s ministry to see if he or she has a court record. Find out the policy of your host church, and meet or exceed the screening required for its children’s workers.

Require everyone to go through this process—no exceptions—and sign up to go first. Your leading by example will eliminate most grumbling and hesitation. Figure the cost of screening into your annual budget, and do not give someone who refuses to be screened a position in your program.

For help with screening, contact a local law enforcement agency, child-abuse prevention program, or your church insurance company. Again, Group’s Church Volunteer Central (ChurchVolunteerCentral.com) is an excellent resource.

**Select a Suitable Meeting Place**

A church building or community center is ideal. So is any other place where kids and adults aren’t isolated. Make it a hard and fast rule that a child and individual adult not be alone together. If there’s something confidential that a Circle of Friends leader wishes to discuss with a child, make sure the conversation happens where others can see the conversation, even if they can’t hear it.

Reserve time to wander around during your program. Observe the interactions to make sure they’re healthy. You may discover that a Discovery Center leader doesn’t understand appropriate discipline or that a Circle of Friends leader feels overwhelmed.

**Set Policies Up Front**

Your host church probably has policies about the following situations. If appropriate, operate your Friends program according to those policies. If your host church doesn’t have clearly stated policies, encourage them to grapple with the issues alongside you.

What will you do if

- a child is injured?
- an accusation is made that a child was mistreated?
- children are unattended after the Closing Celebration?
- a volunteer joins your staff partway through the quarter and wants to skip training?
- A Circle of Friends leader is going the extra mile and picking up and dropping off kids who wouldn’t otherwise be able to participate?
- A tornado alarm sounds in the neighborhood?
- A parent calls to complain that her son doesn’t like his Circle of Friends leader?

Decide now how you’ll handle these sorts of situations. A clear action plan helps your volunteers respond quickly and appropriately.

If your host church doesn’t have safety policies and procedures, create your own. Excellent resources are available to help. You can find customizable policies at ChurchVolunteerCentral.com.

Here are four policies to develop and communicate to all Friends leaders.

1. FaithWeaver Friends has no secret activities or initiations. We don’t want kids keeping secrets from leaders, parents, or one another.
2. Activities will be done as a Circle, at scheduled times and places where all the Circles will get together. If there’s ever an exception, parents must sign a permission form before the activity.
3. Parents or guardians are welcome at all activities, and we hope children share what happens at Friends with their parents. We want parents to be involved!
4. Leaders are here to help children. If a leader asks a child to do something that makes the child uncomfortable, we want the child to speak up and say so. If the child or the child’s parents want to talk with someone besides the Circle leader, we invite them to call the Friends director or the pastor of the host church. Children will receive this information, including appropriate phone numbers. Children will never get into trouble because they went to their leaders, the director, or the pastor to say something made them uncomfortable.

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**Train Volunteer Leaders**

You set the tone for your entire program. Communicate that you care about safety, and volunteers in your program will care too.

Make ongoing safety training a regular event. And determine that no volunteer will interact with children until completing your required training and screening.

Team up with your host church to take advantage of its training opportunities. Explore what’s available through the Scouts, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the school system, or other churches.

**Tell Volunteers When to Keep Things Confidential and When to Call in Help**

Leaders at FaithWeaver Friends review children’s faith journals and may find it tempting to share what they read.

Bad idea.

Friends leaders should keep what children say or write confidential with several important exceptions. Leaders must immediately notify the director if a child intends to harm himself or herself, harm someone else, or break the law. And if a faith journal reveals that a child is being abused, the leader reading it must notify the director.

Plan in advance who to notify if a child discloses a serious problem. Have phone numbers available. You may need to notify parents or call in expert support.
Know Your Limitations—
and Make Sure Your Volunteers Know Theirs
Your volunteers probably aren’t professional counselors or therapists or pastors. Sooner or later they’ll run into problems they aren’t qualified to handle.

So don’t expect them to somehow muddle their way through. Instead, identify competent professionals you can turn to for advice or referral. Referral is vital for a child or family who are facing problems with substance abuse, mental health, violence in the home, or suicide.

Tell Kids What to Expect
A sample letter is included in this section. The goal isn’t to frighten children or suggest that Circle leaders are less than wonderful. Yet you want children to feel empowered to go to another adult if they feel uncomfortable with any leader at Friends. This letter gives kids the information they need and permission to use it.

Tell Parents What to Expect
A letter explaining the boundaries of Friends helps parents know what to expect and what’s appropriate. This is a great place to communicate your safety policies. Nervous parents will relax when they realize that you’re thinking of their children, and already-relaxed parents will appreciate your thoroughness.

Pray
Bathe your entire program with prayer, and that includes safety. Ask God to bless your efforts to protect children.

There is no such thing as an absolutely safe program. Active kids will have accidents even in the safest environments. But you can make sure your Friends program takes reasonable care to anticipate and prevent problems.

Focus on child safety first so that you can stay focused on children’s ministry later. Nothing will sabotage an effective children’s program as quickly as a controversial incident in which a child is hurt. Nothing saps volunteers’ motivation more thoroughly. Nothing frightens away visitors more permanently.

Additional Safety Tips for Preschoolers
If your program includes preschoolers, it’s especially important to have an inside area with sufficient space for active play or a safe area outside. Remove small toys or objects that preschoolers might swallow or choke on. Always remove anything smaller than a 50-cent piece.

If you take children outdoors, keep them within a confined, fenced-in area, and have adequate adult supervision.

When traveling between Discovery Centers, make sure preschoolers are holding hands before leaving a room. Or provide a short length of rope for each Circle of Friends, and ask children to hold tightly to it. Each Circle of Friends leader will then take one end and lead the “caterpillar” of children to the next center.

And at the end of each Friends Preschool program, release preschoolers ONLY to parents or caregivers who sign out their children. Make certain it’s the same parent or guardian who signed in the child, unless special arrangements have been made and confirmed by the person who signed in the child.
First Steps Toward Safety

The First-Aid Kit
Maintain a first-aid kit in a central location. Stock it with adhesive bandages of different sizes, first-aid cream, antibacterial ointment, sterile gauze pads, and insect repellent. You may also want to provide a place for children to lie down if they feel ill. Keep children’s Registration Forms near your first-aid area so that you can call parents or caregivers in case of serious injury.

Your Registration Form provides a place for parents or caregivers to identify food allergies. Dairy allergies are common, but you may also have children who are allergic to gluten (wheat, rye, barley, or oats), nuts, or other foods.

Most of the snacks suggested in the Snack-It Café Leader Guide will require modifications for children with food allergies. Ask parents to recommend foods that their children can eat without a reaction.

Insurance: Make Sure You’re Covered
Your Friends program may be covered by your host church’s insurance policy, but make sure! You want a policy that will protect you from loss as a result of fire, theft, injury, or lawsuits. You’re not likely to have serious injuries, but be prepared just in case.

Facilities: Avoid Accidents by Limiting Temptations
Many accidents related to misuse of equipment or craft materials happen when the supplies aren’t supposed to be used. When game materials aren’t being used, place them out of sight in a box or cabinet. Remove the temptation to suddenly toss a ball at someone’s head or to run around holding scissors.

Keep Your Cool
Talk with your volunteers about how to handle any discipline challenges that arise. Discuss appropriate and inappropriate alternatives. Suggest positive-language responses, and role-play ways to keep tempers in check while communicating and modeling God’s love in all leaders say and do. Provide extra training for less-experienced volunteers who want to serve as leaders.
Sample Release Form

Please be aware that this is a sample form only. Consult with competent legal counsel to firm up the wording of a form for your Friends program.

First Christian Church
123 Oak Ave.
Yourtown, NY 10047
555-1212

Name of child ___________________________ Date of Birth ____________
Address ________________________________ Age ________
City ________________________________ State ___ ZIP ____________
Phone Number (_____) ____________________ Sex ________________

Emergency Contact Person:
Parent/Guardian Name ____________________________________________
Address (if different from child) _________________________________________
City ________________________________ State ___ ZIP ____________
Phone Number (Home) (_____) ________________________________
Phone Number (Work) (_____) ________________________________
Cellphone Number (_____) ________________________________

FaithWeaver Friends is a weekly program hosted at First Christian Church. During the program children will participate in games, singing, drama, crafts, on-site service projects, and other children’s ministry activities.

All activities occur in the church building or on the church property, unless you are notified otherwise. Friends activities will take place only during the weekly meeting unless we notify you about a special activity.

During the program your child will be in a small group of children under the direct supervision of a Circle of Friends leader. All Circle leaders will receive appropriate training for their role and are chosen because they want to lead kids into a closer relationship with God and other children.

You are encouraged to participate in Friends and are always welcome to visit any or all of a weekly program.

If at any time you want more information about Friends or have questions or comments, you can call the Friends director, Mary Johnson, at 555-2222. Or call the church office and ask to speak with Pastor Tom Smith at 555-1212.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John Johnson
Assistant Director
FaithWeaver Friends
Dear Nancy,

We’re so excited that you’re a part of FaithWeaver Friends!

You’ll soon be in a Circle of Friends, a group of five kids and a leader. I’d like to tell you what to expect from your Circle leader.

Your Circle leader is a grown-up (or almost grown-up!) friend who’ll help you learn about God, yourself, and others. Your leader will keep you safe when you’re at Friends and help you join in fun activities such as making snacks, playing games, singing, doing crafts, and helping others through service projects.

Your Circle leader isn’t a baby sitter or a substitute parent or guardian. Your leader won’t be buying you expensive gifts or coming over to hang out on Saturdays. Your leader won’t be giving you rides to and from Friends.

Your leader is a friend and a person you can laugh with, play with, and learn from. Leaders aren’t perfect, but they care about kids in their Circles of Friends!

I’d like you and your parents to see the rules we give our Circle of Friends leaders. That way you know exactly what to expect from these special friends!

Rules for Circle of Friends leaders:

1. Friends has no secret activities or initiations. We don’t want kids keeping secrets from you, their parents, or each other.

2. Activities will be done as a Circle, at scheduled times and places where all the Circles will get together. If there’s ever an exception, parents must sign a permission form before the activity.

3. Parents or guardians are welcome at all activities, and we hope children share what happens at Friends with their parents. We want parents to be involved!

4. Leaders are here to help children. If a leader asks a child to do something that makes the child uncomfortable, we want the child to speak up and say so. If the child or his or her parents want to talk with someone besides the Circle of Friends leader, we invite them to call the Friends director (Mary Johnson, 555-2222) or the pastor of First Christian Church (Tom Smith, 555-1212). Children will never get into trouble because they went to their leaders, the director, or the pastor to say something made them uncomfortable.

That’s what you can expect from your Circle of Friends leader. Your leader and I look forward to seeing you at our very next Friends meeting—where friends and fun go together!

Sincerely,

John Johnson
Assistant Director
FaithWeaver Friends
Extra Ideas!

Enhance your Friends program with these fun ideas.

**Friends Family Meals**

Meals are about more than food. They’re also about relationships.

Jesus certainly thought so. He often shared meals with his followers. Some of Jesus’ most compelling teaching happened around a table.

And in many homes, significant teaching still happens at the family table. But the days when parents and children prepared a meal together, set the table, and then lingered to talk have all but vanished. Families eat in shifts as family members come and go, drawn to different activities. The problem is that unless family members sit down together, mealtimes can’t encourage communication, the sharing of values, or deepen relationships.

By hosting Friends Family Meals, you’ll give families a weekly chance to actually connect over a meal together. You’ll make the meals convenient and help families talk together as you provide fun, meaningful discussion prompts.

**FaithWeaver Friends Family Walk**

“The Family That Walks Together, Talks Together”

A FaithWeaver Friends Family Walk is a noncompetitive 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) walk. It’s *not* a race, and the goal isn’t to cross the finish line first.

Rather, the goal is to encourage family togetherness and good health.

Participants can walk as a family, with friends, or with Circles of Friends. You provide the planning and organization, walkers bring all their own equipment, and God takes care of the scenery.

Which means Family Walks are *easy*.

Family Walks provide an excellent opportunity for families, Circles of Friends, or other groups to talk as they walk. And to help keep the discussion going, provide discussion.
prompts for every kilometer mark.

Some walks are “Family Acts of Kindness” walks. These are mobile service projects that give families something to do as they complete the walk.

Other walks are topical-discussion and skill-building walks that deal with subjects such as “How to be a good friend” and “How to make good decisions.” As families walk, they share stories and insights and engage in meaningful conversation.

Family Walks literally change lives as busy family members set aside time to engage in gentle exercise, focus on one another, and create memories together.
Remember when kids didn’t have so many distractions (sports, phones, video games)? And when families made church a priority and came every Sunday? You need a Sunday school that is “NOW” and not “THEN.”

• **NOW** kids will love coming to Sunday school. Watch them grow in their relationship with Jesus!

• **NOW** busy families will grow together in faith. They’ll explore the same Bible passage in age-appropriate ways.

• **NOW** you’ll have a strategic plan to reach today’s families.

• **NOW** teachers will thank you for choosing Group’s new Sunday school. The perfect balance between low prep for their busy lives and foundational Bible lessons…WOW!

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**WEAVING FAITH into TODAY’S FAMILIES**

SEE WHY FAITHWEAVER NOW WILL WORK FOR YOU!

- ✔ 10 AGE LEVELS: Infants–Adults
- ✔ SCOPE AND SEQUENCE: 3 years
- ✔ FORMAT: Incorporates classroom setting
- ✔ FREE EDITABLE, DIGITAL VERSION
KidsOwn Worship didn’t become the world’s most fun, faith-filled children’s church by following the status quo. Preschoolers and elementary children in harmony in the same room? Kids praising God in their own way? Lessons kids actually remember? KidsOwn Worship does all this and more.

Whether you’ve got five kids or five hundred, KidsOwn Worship fits your kids’ church program. No need to worry about how many show up every Sunday. And it works perfectly with FaithWeaver NOW™ Sunday school, so you can reinforce the same Bible truths in a real, life-changing way.

It’s simple: Kids praise God. Kids learn the Bible Point. And kids pray. Every week. All you need is one quarterly kit and you’re all ready to help children grow closer to Jesus.