



Developing a Heart for Missions in Kids

A Note from Mary Boyd:

Warwick Assembly was first in Division 3 and second in the entire nation for their 2006 BGMC giving, yet the church only has a Sunday morning attendance of 268. I asked the children's pastor, John Miller, to share his heart concerning teaching his kids to give to missions. I also asked him to share what he did to raise these funds. This church has never given this much to BGMC in its history. I hope John's story will be an inspiration and a challenge to you.

God loves missions. Because He loves missions, He wants us to be involved in the work of missions. A missionary once stated that there are three kinds of people. The first kind are the "Goers," the second kind are the "Senders," and the third kind are the "Disobedient." I love missions. I love "going" on missions trips. I also love "sending" others on missions trips. My heart beats passionately for missions, especially when it comes to church planting (both in the United States and around the world).

One of the last things Jesus said to His disciples can be found in Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." I believe Jesus is telling us to do two things. One, go and share the good news of Jesus everywhere, both within our community (home missions) and outside of our community (foreign missions). Two, teach them to live the life that God has purposed for them to live.

I have been serving as the children's pastor/Christian education pastor of Warwick Assembly of God, Hampton, Va., since August 2005. In planning the activities, ministries, etc., for the year 2006, I asked God to speak to my heart about the financial goal for BGMC. At first, I felt like God said \$15,000. I told the senior pastor and our staff of the \$15,000 goal. Two weeks later, I attended the Potomac District Children's Pastors' Retreat. At this retreat, we were to share our BGMC goals during the BGMC banquet. We had a moment of prayer prior to sharing our goals. During this prayer, I felt like God spoke to my heart and said, "I want you to give \$45,000." I jokingly replied back to God, "What! I thought you said \$15,000." God gently responded, "I want you to give \$45,000."

Keep in mind, I had only been at Warwick for about four months at this time. I also knew that the history of BGMC giving for Warwick has averaged between \$1,000 and \$4,000 for the past 25 years or so. In addition, I knew that the attendance in our church was around 45 kids and 275 adults. With all this going on in my head during the prayer, I obeyed and did what I felt like God had said to me and shared our goal of \$45,000 at the retreat. I then came back to the church and told the senior pastor and our staff about the new \$45,000 goal. The following will let you in on our intentional efforts to reach this goal.

Our children's ministry committed quality time in the area of missions during 2006 in order to reach our God-inspired goal of \$45,000. During the year, we taught the value of missions several different ways in order to develop a heart for missions in kids. We taught on missions monthly using the "Around the World" CDs and DVDs from the national BGMC office. We used the animated DVD that shows "The Jim Elliot Story" by The Torchlighters. We brought in Duane Danielsen, AG missionary to the forgotten children in Bangladesh, to do a special missionary service in our kids' church service. We used other missionary slides, stories, and shows to teach on missions. We also have a "Missions Wall" in our kids' church room dedicated to missions so that the kids will have missions in sight every time we are together. Consistently teaching the value of missions to kids will help develop a heart for missions.

In addition to teaching, we also believe that "doing" missions activities will help kids develop a heart for missions. We use the famous yellow Buddy Barrel. We encourage kids to collect change, find change, ask for change, borrow change, everything but steal change to fill up their Buddy Barrels. All our kids will also quickly tell you that my favorite color is **GREEN**.

We keep record of each kid's giving for incentive purposes. We had two BGMC team parties during the year. The boys and girls compete to see which team brings in the most money during the first half and the second half of the year with the winning team getting a "boys only" or a "girls only" party. In addition to the BGMC team parties, we also wanted to get the year started with excitement. So, we began the year with a competition. We told our kids that the top five boys and the top five girls in BGMC giving from January through March would be able to go to Busch Gardens for a day.

We also used National BGMC Sunday to get a major "jump" toward our goal. We used the BGMC envelopes concept. We held our kids' church service in the main sanctuary for the Sunday morning worship service. This was a creative way for our adults to see what a kids' church service looks like. It was also a way for us to raise a lot of money with the BGMC envelopes. We laid out 150 BGMC envelopes, each marked with a dollar amount from \$1 all the way to \$150. At the close of the service, the challenge was for members of the church to come to the front and pick up one, two, three or more of these marked envelopes and to give that amount within two weeks. This was a major success. We raised over \$12,000 using the BGMC envelopes.

The biggest event we experienced in 2006 regarding raising money for BGMC was "Up in the Air." For eight days in September, I lived 30 feet up in the air on a scissor lift in a new shopping center. Our goal was to raise \$30,000 from the "Up in the Air" event. We did it! What an experience! I have so many stories! I can remember a young lady in her twenties who came to me after working at a local restaurant in the shopping center and gave me all of the tips that she made for the night. An older lady came after seeing me on the local news and gave me \$100, saying, "I drove one hour to give you this. Thank you for what you are doing." A local college girl came to me quietly and gave me a check for \$1,000, saying she felt like she needed to give it to me. There are so many more stories of how this "Up in the Air" experience touched our community. My living quarters consisted of a six-foot by twelve-foot space that included a tent with a small refrigerator, a small desk, two chairs, and a megaphone. Of course, I did have a port-a-potty to use when nature called. This event was a great way for our church to be a presence in the community. It was also a great way for our kids to be involved in the community. Our kids would stand below the scissor lift asking people to donate money toward children's charities. Many of our kids developed a heart for missions by participating in this experience.

In addition to these ministries, we also took our kids on their first-ever missions trip. We took 35 people (21 kids, 14 adults) to Boston, Massachusetts for a weekend

in October 2006 to help a church plant, East Bay Church (Pastor Troy Mini). The kids experienced going door to door handing out flyers and inviting the community to come visit this new church. They also experienced sharing their faith with some people as they went door to door. The kids led the entire Sunday morning worship gathering for this church plant, including praise and worship, kids' choir, human videos, puppet show, special singing, and an illustrated message. The kids who went on the Boston missions trip deepened their heart for missions.

Our BGMC goal of \$45,000 for 2006 was more than met. After crunching all the numbers, we were able to raise \$52,397.62. I cannot help but go back to that moment in prayer when I felt like God said, "I want you to give \$45,000." It is amazing to see the results of obedience. Lives all over the world are going to be touched by the hand of God because of obedience. What kind of person are you? Remember, there are only three kinds of people; "Goers," "Senders," and the "Disobedient." Let's be "Goers" and "Senders" and make an eternal difference in the lives of people all over the world just as Jesus told us to in Matthew 28:19-20.

*John & Julia Miller
Children's Pastors
Warwick Assembly of
God
Hampton, Virginia*

Note: Since the writing of this article, John has moved and is now the children's pastor at Evergreen Christian Community Church in Olympia, Wash.

