

GIVING CHILDREN A CHANCE TO SERVE

By Jenny Baker



Anyone serving in the Primary can tell you that children often have difficulty coming to Primary ready to sit quietly and learn. No matter how skilled a leader is or how much teachers love their class, children sometimes act out.

Latter-day Saints have been told that all new members of the Church need a responsibility.¹ Having a responsibility helps them feel a part of the Church and gives them a chance to learn and grow. Children can enjoy these same blessings when they are given a chance to serve.

Callings are not given to children, but Primary leaders can prayerfully search for service opportunities for even the smallest child. Here are a few ideas:

- Have an older child help a younger child during sharing time.
- Invite a child who has arrived early to stand at the door and greet others as they come to Primary.
- Assign an older child to be in charge of making sure the microphone is turned on.
- Ask a few older children to get chalk, eraser, crayons, or other items from the library.
- Ask a child who plays the piano to play a prelude or postlude hymn.

- Assign two friends to sit by a visitor or new member and help the person feel welcome.
- Invite a child to help lead the music.
- Assign several children to help set up or take down chairs.
- Ask a child and the child's family to visit a new child in your ward or branch.
- Ask a child to hold a picture.
- Ask someone to create a simple chalk drawing to go with your lesson.
- Ask selected class members to invent actions to a new song they are learning.
- Help an 11-year-old plan a Primary activity day. This will help the child complete a Faith in God requirement.

However large or small their responsibility, remember to thank children for their service.

I have enjoyed working with children as they have learned to serve. It is rewarding to watch them grow and use skills in the Young Men and Young Women programs that they began to develop in Primary. ■

NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Converts and Young Men," *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.



WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT

Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy tells of a time when he was painting the exterior

of his home and his five-year-old son asked to help: "[After I provided] him with an old shirt of mine that covered him completely, almost touching the floor and with sleeves rolled back several times, we went to work on the door that secured the main entrance to our home. He was applying paint to the bottom panel as I worked on the top section. I noticed that because of his age and physical stature, he wasn't able to spread the paint evenly and that beads of paint were resulting. Each time he bent down to recharge his brush, I would hastily smooth out the paint on the bottom panel, returning to my assigned area so that he would not realize what I was doing. After a while I decided that more important than a first-class paint job was the opportunity to work with my son. On reflection I realized how well he was doing. Thereafter, every time I approached the door and saw the distinctive style of decoration, I was reminded of what is really important in our lives."

From "We All Have a Father in Whom We Can Trust," *Ensign*, May 1994, 30.