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Lesson in love

WHEN THE SCHOOL BELLS RING this fall, you can bet that volunteers from New Hope Church in New Hope, Minnesota (newhopechurchmn.org) will be at school with their own bells on—eager to “be the church” in local schools. Just over a year ago Pastor Greg Braly developed a partnership with schools in their community, helping with everything from building a new playground to providing scholarship funds for field trips. New Hope Church has helped in a variety of projects, asking and listening to school administrators on how the church can truly help in the schools.

Children at New Hope Church collect milk caps and coupons to provide funding for school supplies and equipment. Adults volunteer at the school with tutoring and their young adult ministry held a backpack drive for needy children and then filled them with supplies for the new school year. New Hope adopts teachers as well and once a month provides apples, muffins, granola bars, water bottles, and hot chocolate packs in the teacher lounge with a note from the church letting them know the church supports the role they play in the lives of kids.

New Hope Church has found a way

to partner with local schools by showing God's genuine love in tangible and meaningful ways. Instead of fearing the separation of church and state, these schools are looking to the church as a source of help and love.

Celebrating Great Moments

Make a commitment in the upcoming school year to partner with families in celebrating childhood rites of passage. Here are some big moments in kids' lives that can be extra special when your ministry recognizes these milestones.

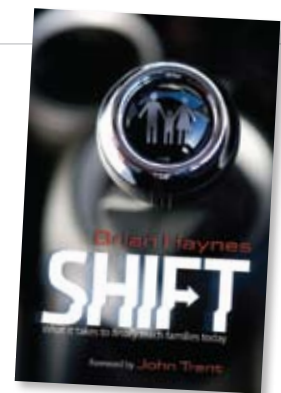
- **Births**—New life is always a reason to

celebrate so let families know you're partnering with them in helping their new bundle of joy grow in faith. Provide families with a basket of basic baby supplies, a diaper tag with your ministry information on it, and a Christian lullaby CD.

- **Birthdays**—Kids love it when people remember their birthday. Send a card in the mail or give kids balloon bouquets on Sunday morning along with a birthday cake to share with their class.
- **The Bible tells me so**—By second or third grade, children are able to read a simple version of the Bible. Give children the gift of God's Word for this milestone and include a personal note on the inside cover along with suggestions on how to start reading the Bible.
- **Promotion**—Whether it's moving from preschool to elementary school or pre-teen to student ministry, send kids off with a bang and celebrate the next step of their faith journey with a party that includes a great slide show and an age-appropriate gift to help them as they move to the next ministry stage.

RESOURCE

Shift by Brian Haynes (Group) helps the church discover what it really takes to reach today's families. Brian gives a practical and workable plan to help churches equip parents to be the primary faith influencers in their homes. By tapping into the natural patterns of faith development, ministries can partner with parents in a family ministry that's sustainable.



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