



# Suttons Bay Bible school brings children and churches together

By LORI HALL STEELE

Special to the Record-Eagle

In late June, hundreds of children parade down the streets of Suttons Bay, towing wagons of canned goods, singing songs of faith.

It's the culmination of an annual ecumenical vacation Bible school that now draws hundreds of children from different Christian denominations. More than 200 Catholic, Methodist, Congregational and Lutheran children gather for the three-day event.

This year's vacation Bible school — titled Leelanau Marketplace 29 A.D. — is planned Tuesday through Thursday, June 25-27. Parents and

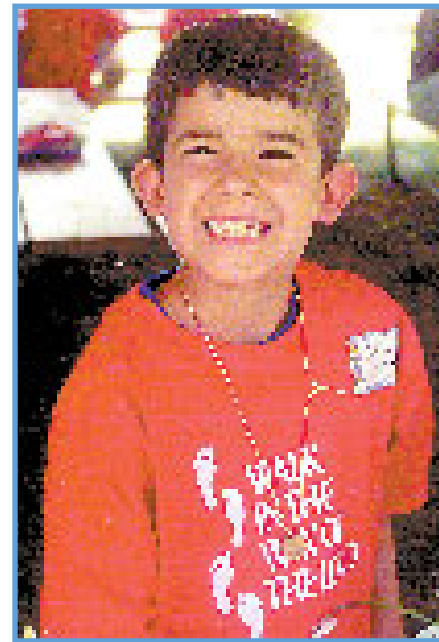
children can visit the grounds on Monday evening to acquaint children to the site and eat ice cream.

Participating churches include Keswick United Methodist, Suttons Bay Congregational Church, Immanuel Lutheran and St. Michael's Catholic Church, all in Suttons Bay. St. Mary's Catholic Church in Lake Leelanau also participates.

"Each church does it differently, but really, we're all celebrating the same good news," said Jennifer Schaub, a parishioner at St. Michael's Catholic Church and director of this year's camp. "Even though maybe we have different rituals or ways of celebrating Jesus, we all break bread together."

During the camp, about 25 tents

Jordan Smith, left, and Richard Herman, right, were two recent students at the Suttons Bay summer Bible school.



are set up at St. Michael's to create the feeling of a Biblical-era marketplace.

Volunteers dress in robes to give kids "a feeling of what it must have been like in Jesus' day," said Jennifer

VerSnyder, office administrator at Immanuel Lutheran Church.

Children are divided into different camps — in the past they

became tribes of Israel and this year, they'll be different apostles — and then each group begins the day with story time. This year's

theme is "his truth is marching on."

"There are scripture lessons, usually questions and answers, and stories that tie it to real life," Schaub said.

Camp-goers make crafts — turning cigar boxes into treasure chests, for instance — and later, everyone heads into St. Michael's to sing together.

"They really love their music," VerSnyder said. "They're just about screaming in the pews."

The grand finale is a parade to an area food bank with children towing the canned goods they've brought to donate. When the camp began 11 years ago, organizers thought it was a way to bring area churches together and reduce the number of volunteers needed. But guess what? Camp attendance quickly snowballed, and today more than 200 children, from preschool age to about 12 years old, attend the three-day event. More than 100 people volunteer to help.

"It started out as a way to bring area churches together," VerSnyder said. "It didn't take long to snowball. Everybody brought their brothers and sisters, and people started coming from downstate while visiting grandma or grandpa."

The churches have intermingled for years.

"The pastors in the Suttons Bay area have always gotten together once a month and just discussed theology, their differences and likenesses. They're always planning ecumenical services, like on Good Friday or Thanksgiving," VerSnyder said.

Schaub, who has served as a "tent parent" at past vacation Bible schools, said the event allows children of different faiths to intermingle and discover common bonds.

"It helps them learn that other faiths and other denominations, really we all believe in the same core values," said Schaub.

Check the religion page on Saturdays in the Record-Eagle for information on Bible school sessions this summer.

Lori Hall Steele is a local freelance writer.



**LEELANAU COMMUNITY CHURCH**

Rev. Carl L. Schaub, Pastor  
245 S. Lake Leelanau Dr.  
Lake Leelanau  
(231) 256-7838  
Fax (231) 256-7839

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**2002 Summer Worship Schedule**

*Contemporary Services*  
9:30 a.m. June 2 - June 23  
8:30 a.m. July 7 - August 25

Weather permitting, the service will be held on  
The Village Green on the fourth Sundays  
*Casual dress encouraged, and welcome*

*Traditional Services*  
11:00 a.m. all summer and at 9:30 a.m. on June 30  
for a special Choral Worship Service presented by our choir

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