

Let the Children Come To Me! What God Is Doing in Castañer CBC

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The pandemic of 2020 affected all our churches in one way or another and attendance was one of those ways. Our CBC church in Castañer, Puerto Rico dropped from an average attendance of 90 to around 40 during this time. Slowly, but surely, attendance was thankfully increasing. However, even though we had a fairly nice group of adults and a good number of youth, we were missing children in our worship. Years ago we had many children, so the question arose, “Where are they?” Then we realized that many of them are now our youth and young adults!

Meanwhile, I had felt the Lord speak to my heart to reach out to kids. During this past Christmas, while visiting my daughter in Virginia, I had the chance to visit our sister church, Antioch CBC, where I sensed the Lord speaking clearly to me during both the worship service and fellowship time that it was time to have a children’s ministry once again at Castañer. **Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me...” Matthew 19:14**

As a result, some interesting things began to happen, and as we all know, kids say the funniest things. One Sunday morning we got a visit from a new couple with a young girl and a 7-year-old boy. The boy is autistic, and what a blessing he has been! The very first day he and his family attended our church, he walked straight up to me after the sermon, gave me a big hug, and told me: “Hey, you are my favorite pastor!” I thought that was cute and I felt honored by his comment. But then he asked, “Pastor, can you please tell me where will be my Sunday School classroom, because I’m coming next Sunday to church again.” I paused for a moment because we were not then having Sunday School for children. But since I knew he expected an answer from his favorite pastor, I told him, “You make sure you get here next Sunday at 8:30 a.m. and you will be told where to go.”



Now I had some homework to do! I called one of the sisters of the church who had been a Sunday School teacher for many years and asked if she could prepare a lesson for one 7-year-old boy. She had to consider that he was autistic, which required special attention and much understanding. She immediately said yes! The following Sunday, young Jeshua arrived to church and was led to his Bible class. It is important to say that he got there before his teacher did and way before 8:30 a.m.! I stopped by during the class to see how everything was going and he was so excited that I didn't even get the chance to ask about the class because he told me right away, detail by detail, what the day's lesson was about! I was impressed but not surprised. I have been a middle school teacher for 34 years and I have had the blessing of having autistic students in my classroom.

That same week I found out that there would be an animal safari in a town close by. It occurred to me to plan a trip and so we made the announcement in church extending the invitation to the adults who had grandchildren. We were able to pack twelve children into our church van with parents and grandparents going in their own vehicles! I was in the van, and wow, did I have a great time!

Praise God children are coming to Castañer CBC again and now we don't have just one Sunday School class for children, we have two! Our church attendance has also gone up! This past Sunday, we had almost 90 people, including the children. We can see where God is going with this and we have already planned a Vacation Bible School for this June. We are extending the invitation to the entire community. I know our Lord is moving in a very special way so the church can reach the children and their families for Jesus. ***...and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47***