



What Is Mission Friends?

Mission Friends is the WMU missions discipleship group for preschoolers from birth through kindergarten. As boys and girls are involved in Mission Friends, they begin the journey of living a life on mission for God.

Purposes

Through missions learning and growing in Mission Friends, preschoolers

- Move from a focus on themselves to a focus on others
- Become aware that God wants all people to know of His love
- Have opportunities to help others and share God's love with others

Preschool Age Groupings

To ensure a higher quality of care and learning, a Mission Friends group can be started with only one preschooler or a larger group, but preschoolers thrive best in small groups. Decide how to group your preschoolers in Mission Friends by the number of preschoolers and the size of the classroom. The materials for Mission Friends use the following age groupings:

- Babies, ones, and twos
- Threes and Fours
- Kindergartners

Many Mission Friends groups have blended age groupings, such as one group with a combination of different ages of preschoolers. A church may have more than one group, divided as needed for babies, ones, and twos; threes and fours; and kindergarten. Leaders are encouraged to group preschoolers according to the preschoolers' needs. The materials can be easily adapted to work for your church and your Mission Friends groups.

Preschool is an exciting time in childrens' lives when they develop an understanding of Who God is and how they play a part in His plan for the world. That's why we created Mission Friends – to provide preschoolers the building blocks of faith and teach them of God's love for all people.



Through engaging activities, games and stories each week, Mission Friends will move from a focus on self to a focus on others. This builds a lasting foundation that helps them grow into the next generation of Christ followers who will fulfill His Great Commission.

How Can I Get Started?

Visit wmu.com/preschool to download a free sample lesson, browse the blog, check out leadership training and register your group.

What Do I Need?



Mission Friends Leader

Each issue of *Mission Friends Leader* is packed with creative activities, stories and games for leading preschoolers in missions each week.

Four quarterly issues — one per leader

Mission Friends Leader Kit

In each *Mission Friends Leader Kit*, you'll find games, songs, posters and vibrant photos to enhance the learning activities found in *Mission Friends Leader*. This kit is a must-have to complement your weekly lessons in Mission Friends.

Four quarterly issues — one per classroom



Visit wmustore.com/preschool or call **1-800-968-7301** to order Mission Friends resources.



I'm a Mission Friends Leader – What Do I Do?

As a Mission Friends leader, you can look forward to reading mission story books to preschoolers, helping preschoolers build a village from Asia or Africa, singing motion songs, and telling stories of missionaries who serve around the world. You will do many things like this as you lead preschoolers in the Mission Friends classroom. The list below shows the overall responsibilities of a Mission Friends leader.

- **Make overall plans for the year:** Look at the year ahead and decide on the annual experiences in which Mission Friends will be involved, such as the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, Children's Missions Day, or a missions recognition service. Place dates on the church calendar. Think about your goals for your Mission Friends group.
- **Plan the sessions in Mission Friends:** Use the Mission Friends Plan Sheet to jot down the activities you choose from *Mission Friends Leader* for the sessions in a month. Plan Group Time for the sessions and a Helping Others activity for the month.
- **Lead missions learning experiences in Mission Friends sessions:** Gather materials for activities you have chosen. Prepare to tell the story in Group Time. Become involved in activities with preschoolers during the sessions. Ask questions and lead preschoolers in conversations related to the missionaries' work.
- **Follow safety and security practices of the church:** Follow the practices your church has in place for receiving preschoolers at the beginning of sessions, and releasing preschoolers at the close of sessions.
- **Assess missions learning experiences:** What worked and what did not work? Is there something that needs to be changed for the next session?
- **Communicate with parents or caregivers of preschoolers:** Share what their preschooler learns in Mission Friends. Copy and distribute "Mission Friends at Home" as a great tool for parents to

continue missions learning at home. Invite parents or caregivers to find additional missions information and activities online at wmu.com/preschool.

- **Make contacts with families of your Mission Friends:** Text, email, or call to keep parents informed of activities. Make contact when a preschooler is absent to see if there are needs.
- **Invite families with preschoolers:** Look for potential Mission Friends within your church or in the surrounding neighborhood.
- **Work within your church budget:** Find out the church's procedures to order materials or request reimbursement for supplies.
- **Keep class records and report accomplishments:** Use attendance and enrollment forms to keep up with records. Report on the things your Mission Friends do by sharing about accomplishments.



Mission Friends Leadership

How many leaders are needed?

Each Mission Friends group needs at least two adults in a classroom for safety and security reasons. The chart below shows the recommended child to leader ratio for preschool groups. For a blended age group, use the child to leader ratio for the youngest preschooler in attendance.

Category	# of Preschoolers	# of Leaders Required	For Additional preschoolers in multiples of:	# of Additional Leaders Required
Babies, ones, and twos	1-6	2	1-3	+1
Threes and fours	1-10	2	1-5	+1
Kindergarten	1-12	2	1-6	+1

Additional leaders are advised when the ratio exceeds these guidelines or when a specific situation would benefit from a smaller leader to child ratio. A church may have safety and security guidelines with a lower ratio of preschoolers per adult, and leaders should follow those guidelines.

Work with church leadership to put protocols in place that ensure the safety of each child placed in your care.

How do leaders divide responsibilities in the classroom?

Leaders for each Mission Friends group determine how they will share leadership responsibilities. A church may have an experienced leader who serves as the lead teacher while another leader assists. In other churches, the leaders may divide responsibilities for planning and leading activities and Group Time.

Do we need a Mission Friends coordinator?

A church with more than one Mission Friends group may select a Mission Friends coordinator. This leader has the responsibility to

- bring Mission Friends leaders together for coordinated planning;
- coordinate activities or events for Mission Friends groups to do together, such as enlistment events or Helping Others activities;
- coordinate training efforts for Mission Friends leaders, such as attendance at a state WMU training event;
- enlist leaders;
- order resources and supplies;
- maintain records and report accomplishments to the church;
- promote Mission Friends within the church; and
- evaluate missions discipleship for preschoolers.



Mission Friends: When and Where

When Do We Have Mission Friends?

The options are endless! The Mission Friends materials are developed for weekly sessions that are one hour long. This is easily adjusted as needed for longer or shorter sessions, or if Missions Friends meets monthly rather than weekly.

Mission Friends can meet during:

- A set time on the church schedule when all children's missions groups meet
- myMISSION activities or Women on Mission meetings
- Midweek prayer services
- Mother's Day Out
- Weekday preschool
- Small group Bible studies during the week
- Preschool worship care
- Parent involvement in regular church activities

Meeting Space

Most Mission Friends groups meet in the preschool classrooms of the church. Work with the pastor or other leaders in your church to decide on the best space for Mission Friends to meet.

Mission Friends is flexible and may be provided in one of these other places:

- A parent teaches Mission Friends to preschoolers at home
- A church member teaches Mission Friends in the home or backyard for preschoolers in the neighborhood
- Mission Friends is part of a community ministry such as a childcare center, mobile home ministry, or apartment ministry



What Happens in a Mission Friends Session?

Babies, Ones, and Twos

Our youngest preschoolers can begin learning about missions! Activities are suggested each month so babies, ones, and twos use their senses to learn about missionaries and the Christian concept areas. Preschoolers learn by repeating activities throughout the month. For weekly sessions, teachers are encouraged to choose two or three activities each week from the listing of activities each month in *Mission Friends Leader*. Use routine times of diaper changing or bottle feeding as teachable moments to say Bible thoughts or simple prayers.

Threes and Fours, Kindergarten

The schedule for an hour's session in Mission Friends might look something like this. Make adjustments for your group as needed.

• Activities in interest areas	35 minutes
• Cleanup time	5 minutes
• Group Time	15 minutes
• Closing Time	5 minutes

Activities in Interest Areas

Preschoolers learn through play, their senses, and doing hands-on activities. In *Mission Friends Leader*, activities are suggested for each week in various interest areas of the classroom. Preschoolers move between activities as they choose and as their attention span allows. Even though activities are suggested for each of the interest areas, Mission Friends leaders choose the activities that will work best for their preschoolers. You might not do all of the activities listed.

Activities are listed for the following interest areas:

- Art
- Blocks
- Books
- Homeliving
- Music and Movement
- Nature
- Puzzles and Manipulatives

Group Time

A large group experience is planned each week for threes, fours, and kindergarten. A page for Group Time plans is included in each session in *Mission Friends Leader*.

Plans include:

- Introduction: A group activity to introduce the mission story or missions area, such as a song, question, or game.
- Mission Story: The story tells about the missionary, their family, and ways they tell people about Jesus. An expanded version of the story is included for Kindergartners. Follow up the story by asking questions listed at the end of the story.
- Prayertime: Suggestions for sentence prayers and ways to encourage preschoolers to pray for the featured missionaries. Give preschoolers opportunities to pray, but do not force them to pray aloud.
- Closing Activity: An activity to review or wrap up the session as parents or caregivers arrive.

Adjusting the Schedule

The schedule on the previous page can be adjusted for your needs. You might change the order by having Group Time first and then going to activities.

Adjustments can also be made for shorter or longer sessions.

If your session is shorter than one hour:

- Plan a shorter amount of time in activities and/or Group Time.
- Prepare some of an activity beforehand, such as cutting out pictures for a collage.
- Allow preschoolers to take home an activity to complete.

If your session is longer than one hour:

- Allow more time in interest area activities.
- Use the Extra Activities at the end of each month's unit in *Mission Friends Leader*.
- Repeat activities or games related to the unit.
- Have a second activity time after Group Time.



Helping Others Activities

Preschoolers are involved in doing missions through Helping Others activities. These are simple ways to move the preschooler beyond himself to think of others. By doing Helping Others activities, preschoolers learn that other people have needs and I can do things to help meet those needs. Preschoolers also learn they can share God's love as they help others.

In Helping Others activities, preschoolers

- Make something,
- Give something, or
- Do something for other persons.

For preschoolers, the others they help could include family members, neighbors, church helpers, friends, community helpers, or teachers.

In Mission Friends, a Helping Others activity is suggested each month for Threes and Fours, and for Kindergarten. An overview of the suggested Helping Others activities is on the Meet the Missionaries page each month in *Mission Friends Leader*, with more details in the noted sessions. Mission Friends leaders may use the suggestions provided, or involve their preschoolers in a Helping Others activity related to a ministry of their church or community.

Planning Helping Others Activities

- **Decide on the activity** your Mission Friends will do.
- **Plan the date and time.** Most of the time, you will do these in your Mission Friends session.
- **Secure parent volunteers** if you need helping hands.
- **Gather supplies** if preschoolers will make something for others.
- **Contact local organizations** beforehand for needs when collecting supplies or making items to give.
- **Inform parents** if they need to bring items for the activity.
- **Talk with preschoolers** about the activity, who they will help, and how this helps others.
- **Include prayer** for the persons whom preschoolers help.
- **Follow up** with anything needed, such as delivering items.

Lead preschoolers to show care to others by sharing God's love.