



Emily Cevallos: Kids with Purpose

How long have you been attending BUMC and how did you initially get connected in the life of our church?

I have been attending BUMC with my husband, Damian since 2007. When we moved to Bethesda, we visited many churches, and BUMC felt the most inviting, lively and family oriented. During one visit, we attended a class at BUMC where we discussed how the Methodist Church felt like it fell in the middle of the two faiths we were brought up in (I was raised in a Quaker church and my husband in an Episcopalian church). The

congregation was welcoming and genuine, making BUMC a perfect fit for us. Since then we have enjoyed raising our two children, Chloe (7) & Maddox (4), in this church.

You have been a coordinator for Kids with Purpose since the start of the program here at BUMC. What compelled you to dedicate yourself to KWP?

In 2009, I volunteered with KCF (Kids Christian Fellowship). In KCF, children watched kids' Christian videos during worship. But I could see the kids were bored watching those same videos again and again. It was soon after that I was approached by *Amee Fansler* who asked if I would be interested in doing more with the kids. She introduced me to *Rosemary Johnson* and told us about *Kids with Purpose*, a mission based program for children to get involved in their community and make a difference. The curriculum was a bit out of our scope for a 40 minute classroom time. But together Rosemary and I created lessons and projects that gave back to the church and our community while encouraging the kids to see what they can contribute.

Tell us about some of the KWP projects that the children are most excited to work on.

The success of KWP is largely due to the efforts and creativity of Rosemary. Together, we planned and outlined over 75+ projects for KWP, including: preparing snacks; making scarves & gifts for the homeless; making dog biscuits, catnip toys, and bird feeders; creating calendars, cards, and paintings; making gifts for the elderly and those who are sick; and doing clothing and book drives and toy collections.

What are some of the ways that you see children (and their families) impacted by their participation in KWP?

KWP has had many fun, challenging and memorable projects for me. The first time I made the dog biscuits it was a mess! The dough was a bit too sticky, flour was everywhere and some kids were wearing more than they used in the recipe! But when it comes mixing and measuring the kids really have fun! Some of the most heartwarming times have been during the Christmas season. One of the projects we do then is packing shoeboxes for children in other countries. Watching the kids prepare those has been a highlight year after year. The time and care they put into each box shows how thoughtful they are. In the summer, we continue to focus on helping other countries with our collections for *Heifer International*. The kids spend weeks learning about other cultures, values, music and geography. It is always enjoyable to hear their questions and become engaged in projects that give back.

How can we as a church better support this program and help it reach its full potential?

I am grateful and thankful for how BUMC has been faithful to our KWP ministry. Your time and donations go a long way. We are always in need of more volunteers to work in the classroom each Sunday. My children are now of age to be in KWP and they love it. Parent participation is always encouraged and I invite you to come help out and see the children engage with their peers. Helping out is so easy...I provide the lesson plan and set up. *Jodie Paustian* has graciously offered to buy our supplies for each project. All we ask of you is to show up and spend time leading the lesson with the kids on Sundays. It's a great way to get involved with our children's ministry and help our community as well! If you are interested in becoming a KWP volunteer or have questions about the program, please email me at emilycevallos@gmail.com. I leave you with our KWP motto, "Here I am Lord Send Me!" I hope that you will consider volunteering for such a great program. And that you enjoy it as much as I do!

Originally published in The Messenger, November 2017