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## Church Together

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### Catholics and Lutherans Working Together

How did it happen that a Lutheran church and a Catholic church hold Vacation Bible School together?



Unable to interest other Protestant churches in the area in holding a joint vacation Bible school, Mt. Calvary Lutheran in Mi Wuk Village, CA., approached All Saints Catholic Church in Twain Harte, three miles down the road, with the same proposition. Unsure that they would even consider working with a different denomination, we were

happily surprised when the plan was quickly approved. That was four years ago and we've been working together ever since.

Without working together, neither church may have been able to hold vacation Bible school because there are fewer and fewer children in the area and fewer adults able to help with such an undertaking. The two churches had many things in common. We shared a commitment to quality Bible-based children's education led

by caring adults. Both churches had been using curricula from Group or Concordia Publishing and had been designing our own crafts, saving money and allowing creativity in the students. Both programs invited teens to help with music, drama, games and small groups.



Of course, there have been challenges. Doctrinal differences were fairly easy to resolve: We decided right away to teach the Bible lessons, not denominationally specific doctrine. At All Saints the Education Director is a paid staff position, whereas the Mt. Calvary Education Chairperson is a volunteer with a full-time job. The situation presented challenges in scheduling planning meetings, set-up, etc.. We also had to devise a common funds and budget

process.

In 2016 when Mt. Calvary was blessed with the arrival of Pastor Debbie McAllister, we were unsure how she would react, but she jumped right on board. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and our willingness to change, we've been able to find a solution to each challenge as it arrived.

Benefits abound. Having a larger number and greater variety of students has made interaction more stimulating and fun. Additional teen helpers brought new talents, and our teens have enjoyed making new friends as they worked on music, Bible dramas and decorations. Adults in both congregations have also formed new friendships. For instance, the women of Mt. Calvary has invited the women of All Saints to Mt. Calvary Women's annual spring retreat in 2018.

Having a larger pool of adults to staff the various positions and do the preparation is a big plus. Each congregation supplies about half of the volunteers. Sharing the cost and having more people to donate food (we provide a substantial lunch every day) and supplies has helped both congregations. Our publicity also reaches more people in a wider area.

The community has also taken notice: When the education director went to the local sign shop to have banners printed, the owner said, "Catholics and Lutherans working together? I didn't think I'd ever see that!"



In the beginning, Mt. Calvary simply brought students and volunteers to All Saints' existing program. With each year, Mt Calvary has become more involved with planning and evaluation. Now it is truly a shared program. Last year VBS was held at Mt. Calvary for the first time. Since it worked equally well, we plan to alternate sites each year in the future. We look forward to more years of this partnership, growing spiritually, joyfully teaching children, and witnessing to Christian unity in our community.

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*Do you have a story that you would like to share? Send any Church Together story requests to [mic@spselca.org](mailto:mic@spselca.org).*

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