

SU News

An inside view of
Scripture Union

Visioning for a New Generation

Not long ago, I met a friend at the beach for a “last hurrah” day of summer – weeks after the SU beach ministries had finished for this year. It was so good to spend time with her, time that was long overdue, as months had turned to years without an opportunity to get together. Between our busy schedules and the restrictions of the pandemic, more time than usual had elapsed. Yet, like it is with old friends, it was as if no time had passed at all. We’ve been friends since kindergarten, and although she had moved away with her family in our middle school years, we remained friends and in touch through every season of our lives. When we are together, it feels like all the places we have been along our journeys come alive again. I can see my history in the history of our friendship, and it is a gift.

It happened without intention that the beach on which we met was the exact one that I had visited earlier in the season on Long Beach Island, NJ. We passed the spot where the sand “pulpit” mound had been built and decorated each day with a message of God’s love; I could see it still with my mind’s eye. I could see the circles of youth, sitting on this very spot, digging into Scripture together. Among memories of fun with Beach Olympics and other games, this spot has held a precious memory for countless people over the years – a memory of the sacred moment when they met God and committed their lives to Him for the first time. I wonder how many others have returned to this beach and remembered their journey here.

I am moved and encouraged by the work that took place on beaches this summer and by the stories told of lives changed during the 60 plus years of beach ministry in the U.S. Our leadership team is committed to supporting, visioning, and growing this work for generations to come. We will be hosting our first ever SU Beach Gathering this November to encourage current leaders and identify emerging ones. Will you pray with us for the leading of God’s Spirit and for everyone who will attend? And be sure to get in touch if you feel a tug to get involved.



Every blessing,

Gail A. Martin, *President, Scripture Union*



Written in the Sand

In 1867, Josiah Spiers, an office clerk inspired by a traveling Children's Evangelist from the USA, had a vision to see the Bible and the Good News of Jesus presented to children in a way that was lively and easily understood. So, in June 1867, he started special weekly meetings for children in central London. He had 15 children at the first meeting. Over the months to come, the average attendance grew to over 300. He called the meetings 'CSSM' which stood for 'Children's Special Service Mission'.

By August 1868, Josiah was so exhausted from his ministry that his friends decided to send him to North Wales for a vacation. On his first day, walking on the beach, he saw children with very little to do. He gathered the children together and invited them to decorate the words 'God is love' that he had written in the sand. Then he told them a Bible story.

The children came back with others the following day. Attendance swelled daily and a beach service at the end of the two weeks attracted 500. And so, the CSSM beach missions were begun.

Over 150 years later, beach missions are still an important part of the world-wide ministry of what came to be known as Scripture Union - including here in the USA, where CSSM stands for Children's Sand and Surf Mission. The style may have changed a bit, but the message hasn't, and is still as relevant to today's children and young people as it was in 1868.

CSSM beach missions provide fun and inclusive activities for children and young people. In creative ways, we share what Christians believe and provide children and young people with an opportunity to hear about Jesus and respond to Him.

The CSSM curriculum is prepared by a team of Scripture Union writers and editors, and includes Bible stories presented in creative ways, singing, games, quizzes and many of the elements found in a vacation Bible school. In special small groups, or 'Bible Diggers', children dig deep into the Bible story that is presented. This also provides time for the leaders and children to get to know each other on a more personal level. These programs are completely free for the children who attend.

Some of the current leaders of CSSM in the USA have been involved in this ministry for more than 20 years. We are grateful for this long-term commitment and for the impact it has on the lives of children and young people, and on the communities where they have been held. We are also grateful for the churches that support the leaders and the ministry.



2021 Beach Missions

Ship Bottom, New Jersey

LEADER: KARYN BAITZEL

Ship Bottom CSSM, the oldest beach mission in the US, began in 1958. Each year, a team of volunteers gathers to bring the Good News to children on vacation and in the local area. Each year, team members go door to door in Ship Bottom at the beginning of each of two weeks to invite children and young people to the program. It is encouraging to see the children running onto the beach each morning with eager anticipation. The leaders spoke of one mother who brought her child for the first time this year. She explained to the leaders that she had come to CSSM as a child and now felt that her child needed what she had experienced all those years ago. CSSM is well known in the community and welcomed by the local Council with some of the Councilors having attended when they were children.

Surf City, New Jersey

LEADERS: LOU AND VALERIE GAUVAIN

Surf City CSSM is the only beach mission that took place in summer 2020 due to COVID - 19 restrictions on all activities. The CSSM team was able to maintain social distancing through the use of individual hula-hoops that were spaced out on the beach for each child. The hula-hoops were repurposed this summer for the Olympic games and other activities on the beach. Children and young people were back in full force and were delighted to see their leaders again. The program was packed with games such as fight-the-tide competition. And there was plenty of drama, the good kind, when the Bible story was presented. Parents often brought their beach chairs and watched the program from a distance. You could often see leaders sitting alongside the parents, getting to know them as well.

Virginia Beach, Virginia

LEADER: ANA STRICKLAND

Virginia Beach CSSM also has a long history and is now working primarily with local children. This summer, a big yellow school bus provided just the right vehicle for transporting children to the beach. The children were beaming as the leaders ran to greet them as they arrived. For some of the children, it was a rare opportunity to enjoy the beach that is only a few miles from where they live. Using a 'buddy' system the children were also delighted to go swimming with their leaders. Through a generous donor, CSSM was able to provide a daily lunch which was enjoyed by the children and leaders while they met in small groups to explore the day's Bible story. Numbers were a little lower this year as some children had to attend summer school - a result of COVID-19. However, many of the team members live locally and will be able to maintain contact throughout the year.



We found some very encouraging comments on the Ship Bottom 'Remember When' Facebook page prompted by the question, "Who went to CSSM in Ship Bottom?" Here are a few of those comments:

"I went to CSSM on 16th Street in Ship Bottom, then my kids went when they were young. I still remember the song My Hat it had 3 Corners. Great memories."

"My sons, now ages 38 and 36 went when they were young. Their leader Hurdle and his wife, Needle, were 2 of their favorites."

"I did! I got in touch a few years ago with one of my counselors, Putt Putt. Amazing chat with him all those years later!"

"I went with my brothers and sister in Surf City. I was so lucky to join the staff for one summer. My name was Treble. What Great Memories!!!!"

(Note that beach mission leaders adopt special names for the program.)

Resources for Sharing Joy this Thanksgiving and Christmas

Fall is here! We do things in these months that we do in no other. If you live in the North, it's time to enjoy cooler weather and the changes in foliage. It's also time to prepare for winter – there's raking to be done, warmer clothes need to be brought out, the kid's boots from last year need to be checked to see if they still fit. Those of you who live in the South may not have the same pleasures and challenges, but there is one thing we all have in common – Thanksgiving and the anticipation of Christmas!

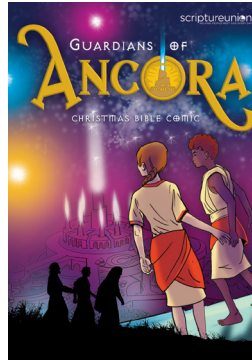
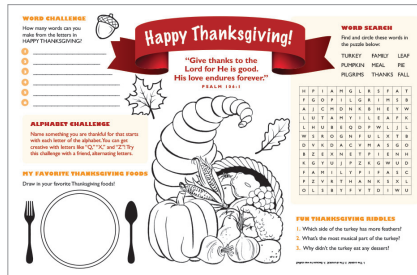
Scripture Union has prepared Thanksgiving placemats and Christmas comics for you to use during these holidays that most of us enjoy. Whatever festivities you plan for, these two SU products will give you tools that point to our best reason for thanksgiving and celebration. Both are ideal for use by churches for their Thanksgiving and Christmas outreach and also for families to use as part of their holiday activities.

'The Road to Thanksgiving' placemat includes a brief background for Thanksgiving, a Bible reflection, and fun activities focused on celebrating God's goodness to us.

Our *Guardians of Ancora* Christmas Bible-based comic is based on the award-winning *Guardians of Ancora* app. Children also can join the characters from Scripture Union's ground-breaking game as they rediscover the Christmas story.

Churches will want to order these resources to include with their community outreach. They also may want to order them for distribution among their church families; they are especially nice to include alongside food distribution efforts. Smaller quantities are available for individuals.

Reserve today, by calling 800-621-5267, or order online at www.Store.ScriptureUnionResources.com.



Gift Memberships

Gift memberships are a great way to make sure that your friends, family and loved ones can begin meeting with God every day. The celebration of Christ's birth is a wonderful time to introduce them to God's written Word. No matter their familiarity with the Bible, Scripture Union has a Bible Guide specifically designed to help them discover the joys of reading and living God's Word.

Newer Christians and young adults will especially appreciate the relevant, practical discussions of Scripture in *Discovery Bible* guide. Those with greater Bible experience and a more mature faith will be challenged by the more reflective daily readings in *Encounter with God*.

Gift memberships can be ordered using the enclosed form, or, even faster, at www.ScriptureUnion.org/membership



Testimonials

'I've found your *Encounter with God* to have a daily impact on my life for years. Thanks for the bite sized pieces of God's word along with commentary, challenge, and prayer that help me to start my day off right.' – **PW, Bedford, NH**

'Scripture Union has been part of my life for 30 years and has continually provided spiritual edification as well as sustaining my faith in God. It surely is the most unspoken treasure of spiritual reading.' – **EJP, Nazareth, PA**

'I was first introduced to SU within about 6 months of moving to London nearly 27 years ago. I have used it ever since and given as Christmas gifts to family and friends. I'm so grateful to have SU available every day - like my morning coffee! Thank you.' – **SS, Naples, FL**