

**THE CHILD, PRE-TEEN  
AND YOUTH WORK  
IN THE FINNISH  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

# The Child, pre-teen and youth work

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### \* It all started at Sunday Schools and in confirmation school at the end of the 18th century

- The Finnish Sunday School Association was founded in 1888.
- Sunday schools are led mainly by volunteers. The majority of Sunday school children are in pre-school age. School children are brought together by hobby Sunday schools, Sunday schools for families bring together parents with their little children.
- The most traditional work form in parish children work looks for new working methods especially in towns.

### \* Youth work was organised by associations in the beginning of the 20th century, in the following decades it was organised by parishes

- The first Christian associations for the young were founded over one hundred years ago (for instance, The Evangelical Lutheran Association for Youth in Finland in 1905).
- In the 1930's the first positions of youth pastors were made available. The aim of the work was focussed on parishes especially after the second world war.
- The education of youth workers commenced in 1949.

### \* Clubs for the pre-teens became common in the 1950s

- The beginning of club activity in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Now the focus is on the 12–14 year-olds. New ways of action are on demand for this active media generation in order to prevent dropping out after clubs and before confirmation school.

### \* New courses of action were introduced in the 1960s: youth cafès, work among youth gangs, gospel music for the youth

### \* Strengthened co-operation with day care and schools

### \* Confirmation school becomes a part of the youth culture

- Especially the introduction of confirmation school camps in the 1960's and 70's increased popularity of the confirmation school.
- Nowadays also the ones who do not belong to the church take part in the confirmation school.

### \* Day care centers really popular in the 1990s, afternoon clubs for school children already since the 1970s

- Day care activity that became common in the 1960's had grown by the 1990's to be the most effective and strongly appreciated form of the child work.
- After the six year-olds became members of the free-of-charge pre-education, the minimum age of day care children has been lowered to three years of age in many places.

### \* Working in networks becomes more popular in the 1990s

### \* In the beginning of the 21st century emphasis was being placed on families, small school children and young adults

- The well-being of families and the support to help parents to get through each day is more strongly seen as something to aim for. Clubs for the whole family is a growing work form.
- The morning and afternoon activities for young school children are being strengthened more and more.
- The strengthening of the possibilities for young adults to act and influence is a considerable challenge (the majority of those who have left the church are young adults, this age group also is religiously the most passive).
- The greatest financial investment is placed on the child and youth work in the running costs of the work forms in parishes.

## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- \* Professional education commences in 1949 (church youth worker)
- \* Primary education unified in 1978, as part of intermediate youth worker education in sparetime activity in 1987

## EDUCATION IN THE 21st CENTURY

### \* Church nursery teacher:

primary degree in child and family work (180 ECTS credits)

- Primary degree is a professional degree obtained from a second degree institution
- 12 educational institutions, annually approx. 250–300 degrees
- Curriculum based education or competence based qualifications (for adults; mainly qualifications are taken after the preparatory education or as part of apprenticeship training)
- The graduates work in a parish as church nursery teachers and in day care units having the same tasks as practical nurses and nursemaids

### \* Children's work specialist:

university degree and specialised studies in Christian early childhood education (30 ECTS credits)

- Specialised studies available at Diaconal Polytechnic unit in Järvenpää

### \* Church youth worker:

Polytechnical degree (210 ECTS credits)

- A polytechnical degree in sociology, health and sports B.S. in Soc. (Polytechnic) can be obtained at Diaconal Polytechnic or at Yrkeshögskola Sydväst in Lärkkulla
- A Polytechnical degree in arts, community pedagogue (Polytechnic) can be obtained at Keski-Pohjanmaa Polytechnic at its Ylivieska unit at Raudaskylä
- Annually approximately 100 students graduate from three different Polytechnical institutions. They can apply for the positions of church youth worker.

### \* Further education to child and youth workers is provided by the dioceses, the church educational center and other unit of the Church Council, educational institutions and organisations

- Due to changes in the educational system new graduates need further education that supports the spiritual identity of a worker in the church
- The ones who graduated during the intermediate educational system need further skills in methods and work practice of social and educational field

### \* Degree based education and vocational further education at second degree institutions

- Degree based education is a part of preparing for the competence based qualifications in vocational and specialised vocational degrees

### \* Specialised studies at Polytechnical institutions

- Presumably in 2006 onwards there will be a permanent type of a higher Polytechnical degree at Master level

### \* The challenge is to improve learning at work and practise

## **THE STARTING POINTS**

### **for the child, pre-teen and youth work in the church**

- \* **The presence of God in the world and the presence of Christ in the word and the sacraments**
  - \* **baptism**
  - \* **the Great Commission**
  - \* **the Gospel for children**
- \* **reaching out for every child and teenager (including the ones who have not yet been baptized)**
- \* **societal commitment and networking in the civic society**

**The strategy 2010 outlined in the church child, pre-teen and youth work document states that:**

- \* ***God exists***  
—and people can be helped to see His image in the world
- \* ***Life is now***  
—not only in adulthood but also in childhood, in pre-teens and in teens
- \* ***Love makes us tick***  
—it calls us, sends us, makes us make our move

## **THE AIM of the child, pre-teen and youth work is to**

- \* support an individual to find meaningful life
- \* offer opportunities to get in contact with the holy and loving God
- \* let the young meet with the adults who care about them
- \* make it possible for the young to experience commitment and togetherness
- \* offer means to pass on tradition from generation to generation
- \* make the young realize that they are being respected as themselves and at their age
- \* support an individual to grow as a person and a christian
- \* enhance individual thinking among the young

## **THE CHILD, PRE-TEEN AND YOUTH WORK IN THE CHURCH**

- \* **is a bridge that takes an individual from childhood to adulthood**
  - Approximately 50 000 children are being baptized in Finland every year.
- \* **is divided into different sections according to age of the young (age variation: 0–29-year-olds)**
- \* **is active in parishes, deaneries and dioceses and is supported by the church and its organisations**
- \* **is active in parishes with over 4 000 workers and over 40 000 volunteers**
  - Church nursery teachers and children's work specialists (2 700, 99% of them women)
  - Youth workers (1 300), pastors
  - Group counsellors at confirmation camps (14 000), club advisors (9 000), Sunday school teachers (6 000), scout advisors (9 000), assistants in youth work (1 000)
- \* **as partners of families and all of those who work with children and pre-teens with schools and educational institutions works**
  - The main starting point is baptism. Therefore, the most natural and the most central partner is a family and a child's home (also godparents and grandparents).
- \* **with schools and educational institutions**
- \* **in different networks**
  - For instance, with day care, school, municipal youth work, sports clubs and organisations
  - (Apart from confirmation school, there are more girls than boys in each age group)

## **The child, pre-teen and youth work GATHERS**

### **\* annually 300 000 children, pre-teens, teenagers and young adults to take part in regular activities**

- 68 000 children at day care centres
- 59 000 children at Sunday schools
- 17 000 school children for morning and afternoon circles
- 3 000 for childrens´ music clubs
- 76 000 pre-teens for their clubs
- 38 000 scouts
- 19 000 take part in the clubs for teenagers
- 3 000 young adults take part in their own circles

### **\* 89 % of all of the 15 year-olds go to confirmation school (their total annual number is 58 000)**

- The starting point in confirmation school is the experiences of the young themselves and different situations in life, the elements of the teaching “life, faith and prayer” (the new confirmation school plan).
- The total length minimum six months, parish and congregation as the learning environment, the aim is to have an active and working connection to a congregation (a young person already is a member of a parish!).
- Confirmation school operates as team work, the mission of the congregation is a shared one.
- A confirmation school group often wants to come together again for another weekend after confirmation school

### **\* over 1 200 000 take part in special events: excursions, camps, festivals, concerts and events for which they have been invited**

- 420 000 pre-teens and young people come together annually at camps or take part in excursions.
- Parents are also invited to many of the events meant for children.

### **\* thousands join in at national mass events**

- The church youth conference independently every other year and united with the church conference every other year (attendance over 2 000)
- The international mass camp for the pre-teens every fourth year at Partaharju (attendance over 2 000)
- The annual conference of the church that is regularly held every other year gives something for everybody

### **\* children and parents attend family circles (total attendance 1 200 000), camps, musical nursery school for babies, church service for babies and families with kids**

### **\* parents and other educators for discussions**

## **The child, pre-teen and youth work ACTIVATES, TRAINS...**

### **\* volunteer workers: to become group counsellors at confirmation camps, club advisors, Sunday school teachers, assistants for specialised youth workers**

- Focussing on education is typical for the youth work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, approximately 25 000 young people take annually part in confirmation camp counsellor training. Moreover, club advisors, Sunday school teachers and youth work assistants are being trained.
- For many young adults volunteer work is a significant way to act.

### **\* young people to express themselves (music, drama)**

- Music is given a great importance already in child work. The church has its own goals in educating little children with music.
- Singing together is central among the pre-teens and the young. Nuoren seurakunnan veisukirja (The song book of the young congregation) has become a continually renewing classic. -Other song books that are being widely used are Lasten virsi (Children' Hymn Book) and Laulutuuli (Song in the wind). Also the tradition to sing hymns is being actively enhanced for instance with VirsiVisa (the hymn contest) that is designed for school children.
- "Suomi-gospel" (gospel songs sung in Finnish) has been the channel for the young to express their feelings for over 40 years now. Young musicians in parishes have been offered opportunities to perform and receive training.
- For instance, evening programs at camps encourage them to show and use their own abilities for expressing themselves. Drama groups for the young are active in few parishes.
- International music and drama co-operation is available for instance through SALMA (Southern African Liturgy and Arts).

### **\* to commitment and influence**

- The aim for the child and youth work is to support the dialogue between different age groups and to offer real experience in participation and a feeling that your voice is being heard. The young are offered real responsibility for instance in assisting in different tasks.
- The NAVI (young adults' influential group) that was founded on their own initiative offers active support to raise the voice of young adults in the decision making in the church both at local level and in the church assembly: education, election campaigns, meetings.

### **\* to stop and think about issues**

- The importance of prayer and devotion, meeting with the holy one, in gathering child and youth work becomes more central.
- The African gospel mass in 1981 started a boom in masses designed for children, pre-teens and the young. Several dozens of masses have been written. Child and youth workers are more and more active in planning the masses, children and the young in their implementation. Also retreats are trying to find their place in youth work.
- Family services are being actively developed. Services and church excursions also are a natural part of day care and school activities.
- Children have been allowed to join their parents or godparents for the Holy Communion since 1979, confirmation school groups with their teachers since 2003.
- Guidance is being given more and more strongly also to the use of Christian symbols and rites.

**\* to see things globally**

- Parishes (partly aided by organisations) organise trips to international and ecumenical youth events. Few international confirmation and other camps are annually being organised in Finland.
- The young are also trained and sent as official representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church to international events. In Aameba-group that is free in form the young adults train each other in their meetings through their international and ecumenical experiences.
- The co-operation group of international affairs co-ordinates the international and ecumenical youth work (members include local parishes, dioceses, Kirnu, SEN).
- Material is being published to educate what internationality means.

## **The child, pre-teen and youth work MEETS, SUPPORTS, UNITES**

### **\* parents and families**

- The first contact to the family is made during the baptismal discussion. The church comes closer to little children – and through them also to families – in different phases of celebration and rites (birthday cards or invitational events, a complimentary call or a book for a present for the 1–4-year olds, the beginning of school)
- Later a natural way to be in touch with parents will be through, for instance, day care and confirmation school.
- Efforts are made also to support parents and parenthood in discussions and by sending material (for instance, the ten theses on parenthood and the good life of a child).

### **\* children, pre-teens and teenagers in day care and schools and also in sparetime activities**

- At the same time when a connection to a congregation that supports Christian identity is being created, the church also wants to meet with the children and the young in places where they naturally already are.
- Altogether approximately one third of the pre-teens are being contacted at schools and in hobbies.
- Religious (generally Christian) and ethical education is controlled by law. Contacts between parishes and municipal day care has become part of every day practice: visits, services, church excursions, material, educational co-operation, day care godparents in parishes.
- There is no “practised religion” at schools but links to parishes are in general good and tight: school services, morning readings, school pastor and school godparent activities, concerts, visits during the lessons, educational co-operation and co-operation in having school somewhere else than at school are a natural part of a school year.
- Some parishes have workers or responsible persons of their own at vocational schools, colleges and universities.
- For instance there is educational co-operation with sports clubs and events are being organised in co-operation with them.

### **\* those in danger of becoming ignored or those who have gotten in trouble**

- Two thirds of the Finnish young people have gotten good starting points for their lives, one third of the young have a lot of problems.
- The educational workers are looking for stronger contacts with deacons and deaconesses and the work forms among children, families and young people are being developed, for instance, through different projects (for example, Sopuavain= key to peace and harmony)
- The youth and pre-teen work that re-enforce the image of the young, prevent the young from losing their way in society and focuses on friendship have following forms, for instance: small groups, seeking the young on the streets, Saapas (The Boot)-action, work at festivals, night cafes, open doors, work in prisons, personal discussions, education.

### **\* workers in the same profession**

- Networking with the central co-operational partners such as day care and school is part of the child and youth work in parishes. Network co-operation between day care, school, hobbies and parish is active all over Finland. For instance, the specialised youth work is active in co-operation with the municipal youth work.
- Network operation means, for example joint projects, consultation and joint education.

## **KIRNU**

is a co-operative network run by the church service organisations and the church government that serves the parishes.

This co-operative body supports child and youth work and is itself active participant in it. Kirnu organisations have joint projects and they also work independently.

### **Church service organisations**

ÜNuorten Keskus – NK

The Evangelical Lutheran Youth Centre in Finland

ÜSuomen Poikien ja Tyttöjen Keskus – PTK ry

The Christian Association for Boys and Girls in Finland

ÜSuomen Ev.-lut. Seurakuntien Lapsityön Keskus – SLK

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Parishes' Centre for Child Work

ÜSuomen Lähetysseura – SLS

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

### **Church Council**

ÜKirkon kasvatus ja nuorisotyö -yksikkö – KKN

The Unit for education and youth work

## **KIRNU is active in**

\* planning, policy clarification and developmental operation

– strategy, focal points, confirmation school planning

\* KIRNU provides courses and training up-dates as well as worker gatherings

– The attendance at the child and youth workers' annual conference is about 1 000

\* co-operating with the other christian organisations

\* taking part in the co-operation of the national child, pre-teen and youth organisations

\* creating and strengthening international connections

\* trying to improve the well-being of children and the young in the church and society

– for example, KIRNU has declared to be a community that protects children

\* producing publications

\* taking part in the co-operation of the national child, pre-teen and youth organisations

\* creating and strengthening international connections

\* trying to improve the well-being of children and the young in the church and society

– for example, KIRNU has declared to be a community that protects children

\* producing publications

\* producing magazines

– for workers and volunteer workers

ü *Villi (Wild)*

for youth workers (published by KKN, NK, PTK)

ü *Kristillinen Kasvatus (Christian education)*

for professional educators (published by KKN)

ü *Pikkuväki (Little folk)*

for professional educators dealing with little children (published by SLK)

ü *Pyhäkoululehti (Sunday school magazine)*

for Sunday school teachers (published by SLK)

– for children, pre-teens and parents

ü *Lasten pyhäkoululehti*

Sunday school magazine for children

(published by SLK)

ü *JiiPee (JP)*

for pre-teens (published by PTK, SLS and Finnish Blue Ribbon)

ü *Music Mission*

magazine for the young (published by SLS and Publishing house Kust. Oy Kotimaa Ltd.)

# KIRKON KASVATUS JA NUORISOTYÖ (KKN)

**The unit for education and youth work** an expert and co-operative body of the child and youth work in the church council

## Areas of operation

- \* education and upbringing of children
- \* education and upbringing of pre-teens and the scouts
- \* confirmation school
- \* youth work, specialized youth work, young adults
- \* education at schools, co-operation in sports
- \* educational co-operation
- \* vocational education and universities, adult education
- \* international and ecumenical connections

## KKN is involved in

- \* developing and co-ordinating youth work at national level
- \* taking part in the development of upbringing, education and youth work in society
- \* organising worker gatherings, training up-dates and specialized studies
- \* publications
- \* trains and sends out young people and workers to international and ecumenical conferences

## Contact information

Kirkon kasvatus ja nuorisotyö  
The unit for education and youth work  
Satamakatu 9, P.O. Box 185  
FIN-00161 Helsinki  
tel. +358 9 180 21, fax +358 9 1802 208  
first name.last name@evl.fi

For more information:  
[www.evl.fi](http://www.evl.fi)

## **NUORTEN KESKUS ry (NK)**

**The Evangelical Lutheran Youth Centre in Finland** was founded in 1905 and it is a national service organisation in Christian youth work. Members include approx. 170 parishes and 8 associations.

### **The aim is to**

- \* strengthen a young person in his faith, support his growing up to become a balanced person
- \* and encourage him to take part individually in all kinds of activities both in a parish and in society

### **NK is involved in**

- \* developing the youth work in parishes in co-operation with others and independently
- \* organising training for young people, for workers in different parishes and towns and for volunteers as well (for example in interaction and human relations skills, encountering domestic violence and helping underachievers)
- \* organising gatherings and events for the young: camps, the youth workers' annual conference
- \* trying to pave the way for young adults to act (NAVI)
- \* helps young people in trouble through the Service operation Boot (Palveluoperaatio Saapas)
- \* publications for youth work and confirmation schools including publications for group counsellors through the Evangelical Lutheran Childrens' Centre (Lasten Keskus Oy). NK is one of the shareholders of LK
- \* takes part in current projects that concern children and young people
- \* gives out information to youth workers in different parishes about how to organise international excursions and organises international excursions for the young

Head office in Helsinki, Centre for courses and camps Pöyhölä in Keuruu

### **Contact information**

Nuorten Keskus ry  
The Evangelical Lutheran Youth Centre  
Liisankatu 27 A 5  
FIN-00100 Helsinki  
tel. +358 9 6229 670, fax +358 9 1357 124  
toimisto@nuortenkeskus.fi

For more information:  
[www.nuortenkeskus.fi](http://www.nuortenkeskus.fi)

## **SUOMEN POIKIEN JA TYTTÖJEN KESKUS – PTK ry (PTK)**

**The Christian Association for Boys and Girls in Finland** was founded in 1989 to function as a service organisation concentrating on the pre-teens.

It continues the work of Poikien Keskus (The Boys' Centre) and Tyttöjen Keskus (The Girls' Centre). Approx. 350 member parishes and five regional offices that operate in different dioceses.

### **The aim is to**

- \* encourage the pre-teens to live according to the Christian faith, strengthen their personal development, improve the quality of work that concentrates on pre-teens

### **PTK is active in**

- \* organising training and gatherings for people who work with pre-teens and in morning and afternoon clubs
- \* training volunteer councellors and organising international gatherings for young councellors and youth groups
- \* developing new ways of action for working with pre-teens
- \* publications (books, software, materials for clubs, materials for handicraft)
- \* publishes JiiPee-magazine
- \* organises camps, treks and national and regional events, developes activities at camps
- \* offers opportunities to international contacts for pre-teen and youth work in different parishes

Head office in Pieksänmaa at Partaharju, course and camp centre, other offices in Helsinki and in Kurikka, trekking centre Tievatupa in Lapland.

### **Contact information**

Partaharjuntie 361  
FIN-76280 Partaharju  
tel. +358 15 7820 200,  
fax +358 15 7820 201  
ptk@ptk.fi

For more information: [www.ptk.fi](http://www.ptk.fi)

# SUOMEN EV.-LUT. SEURAKUNTIEN LAPSITYÖN KESKUS ry (SLK)

**The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Parishes' Centre for Child Work** is a service, expert and co-operational organisation concentrating on children and families in the church. SLK continues the work of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Sunday School Association that was founded in 1888. SLK has about 450 member parishes.

## **The aim is to**

- \* develop, support and guide work with children and families
- \* take part in and have an influence on the work for children and families in the church and society

## **SLK is active in**

- \* is the uniting force of the child and family work in the parishes and the voice of children in the church
- \* develops working methods both to strengthen the religious and spiritual growth of children and adults and to relieve distress in children and at their homes
- \* works especially in Sunday schools, in religious education at day care centers, in morning and afternoon activities, with families and in music organises in co-operation hundreds of training courses annually
- \* publishes through Lasten Keskus Oy (the Evangelical Lutheran Childrens' Centre) books and materials to meet the needs of parishes and homes
- \* is a supportive organisation for Pyhäkoulun Ystävät ry (Friends of Sunday School)
- \* develops working methods to support parents and educational partners

## **Contact information**

Särkiniementie 7 A  
FIN-00210 Helsinki  
tel. +358 9 6877 4510, fax +358 9 6877 4545  
first name.last name@lastenkeskus.fi

For more information: [www.evl-slk.fi](http://www.evl-slk.fi) or [www.lastenkeskus.fi](http://www.lastenkeskus.fi)

## SUOMEN LÄHETYSSEURA (SLS)

**The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM)** is the biggest and oldest missionary organisation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church (founded in 1859). It is an expert in mission and multicultural education. There are child and youth workers who work regionally all over Finland. Members include all of the local parishes as well as natural persons and organisations.

### The aim is

- \* a parish that has internalized the Great Commission, a parish that trains from among its own people supporters and doers for mission

### SLS is active in

- \* producing and publishing material for different age groups (books, software, CDs, exhibitions)
- \* offering expertise and visiting speakers for different events in parishes
- \* organises camps, courses and other gatherings and campaigns for children, pre-teens, teenagers and young adults
- \* organises the annual mission festival for children, pre-teens and teenagers
- \* organises musical activities (bands and choirs, training, concerts)
- \* organises preliminary missionary courses for young adults

Head office in Helsinki, 5 diocesan youth workers, Course centre Päiväkumpu in Längelmäki

### Contact information

Tähtitorninkatu 16–18, P.O. Box 154  
FIN-00141 Helsinki  
tel. +358 9 129 71, fax +358 9 1297 337  
first name.last name@mission.fi

For more information: [www.mission.fi](http://www.mission.fi)