

Acorn Bank Ministry

Bank Breaking Sunday

The Acorn Bank Ministry Description

The Acorn Bank giving program in the Missionary Church is an important source of funds for World Partners USA. While the program is primarily a resource for teaching important stewardship lessons to children, many adults find the discipline of using the Acorn Bank to be meaningful as well. In addition it gives children a distinct sense of giving to missions and is often used by families and churches to help children think about and pray for the needs of missionaries, especially missionary children.

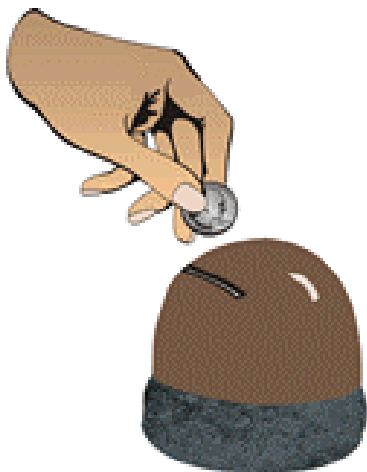


The Acorn Bank program has a long history in the Missionary Church, beginning in 1904 as part of the Sunshine Makers, a ministry of the denomination to children.

Banks formed in the shape of acorns are supplied to churches by World Partners USA. These banks are given to children along with a challenge to put coins in their bank for missions. The official Bank Breaking day for Missionary Churches is the second Sunday in November; however, churches often specify other dates that better fit their calendars.

Bank breaking ceremonies vary from church to church and may involve simply a Sunday school class or perhaps the whole congregation. The banks are broken and the funds are collected and submitted to World Partners USA. The money from Acorn Banks is used to assist with education and medical insurance for missionary children while they are living on the mission field.

The Acorn Bank Story



A long time ago there lived a young girl named Macy Gareth (pronounced Garth) who loved children very much. Many grown-ups noticed that, not only did she love the children, but the children loved her too. One day when Macy was thirteen, the man in charge of Sunday school said to her, "Macy, I think you should teach a Sunday school class of boys and girls. Will you do it?"

"Oh, no," Macy answered. "How could I ever do that? I'm only thirteen."

"Sure you can, Macy. Look how they all follow you around," said Mrs. Roth smiling kindly at the young girl.

"They're always asking you to tell them stories," added Mr. Roth. "They listen to every word you say."

"But I'm not much bigger than they are," Macy stammered, distress showing in her face.

"We'll all pray for you," Mr. Sprunger assured her.

"Won't you at least give it a try?" asked the man in charge of the Sunday school.

"We think you will be able to teach this class better than anyone else we have."

Macy finally agreed to try the class for a short time. It wasn't long before Macy found that teaching this class made her happier than anything. She asked a carpenter to make her a blackboard. She used colored chalk to draw pictures to go with the lessons. The children were quiet and could not wait to see what was coming next. Boys and girls became more important to Macy than anything else. Her greatest desire was to teach them about Jesus.

Macy grew up and married a preacher, Rev. J.E. Ramseyer. In 1902, Macy went with her minister husband to the very first Missionary Church Association Convention. The meetings were held in very large tents, because the denomination was still new and did not have the big beautiful buildings they have today.

One day, as Macy listened to a very heart-searching missionary message, she thought to herself, "I hope the boys and girls are as moved by this message as I am." She looked around to see how many children were in the meeting. To her sorrow, there was not one boy or girl under that big tent listening to the missionary.

"Where are they?" she wondered. A boy yelling somewhere near her caught her attention. She slipped quietly out of the tent to try and find the children. She discovered the boys at the school playground having an exciting ball game. As she walked around the school, she found the girls on the other side taking care of their little brothers and sisters.

"Something must be done about this," Macy thought. "If the children are not interested in missions when they are young, they may never care about those in other lands who need Jesus."

At the end of the morning service she looked for the one in charge of the convention. "Mr. Chairman," she asked, "could we have some time in the day when we could have children's services?"

Mr. Chairman replied, "the day is full from the six o'clock sunrise prayer meeting to the ten

o'clock altar service in the evening. But," he continued, "there is one half-hour right after lunch. You may have that time for the children."

It wasn't very much time, but Macy was thankful to have even this small amount of time for the little ones. She started to hunt for the children. She had to work fast, for there was not much time. The boys and girls were excited when they found out they were going to have a meeting of their very own. They quickly spread the news. They were told to get in line early for the noon meal so they could eat at the very first table. This was done as quietly and quickly as possible so the big folks would not stop them. When the dinner bell rang, all the children marched in first. The big people thought there had been a sudden increase in attendance.

The first children's meeting was wonderful! Macy used a little old-fashioned organ. She tacked wrapping paper on the back of it and with the use of crayons gave an illustrated lesson. They probably sang, "Jesus Loves Me," and perhaps, "Jesus Loves the Little Children."

From that time on the children were given a special time on the missionary program. The boys and girls filled the place. In fact, they could scarcely find a place big enough for all of them.

In that first meeting not a thing was mentioned about missions or about a missionary offering. In the next year, 1903, a missionary program was started among the children. The theme was, "The Promotion of the Spirit of Missions in the Hearts of the Children." The money given by the boys and girls was called, "Sunshine Money for Shady Places."

In 1903, Macy was able to get some little missionary banks in the shape of a small jug. That is how the name "missionary jug" began. Since then the little bank has changed its shape. It is now a pretty little acorn, but for some years it still was called the "missionary jug."

Fifty of these little jugs were bought and sent to Groveland, Illinois, where the convention was held in 1903. One day one of the boys came running to Macy and with curiosity said, "There's a box at the station with your name on it. What is in it?" She did not want to tell the secret ahead of time for that would spoil the surprise. "Wait until Sunday," she answered. "You will find out then."

Between that day and the following Sunday, Macy prayed a great deal about these little banks. Satan talked to Macy the same as he does to you and me. He said, "What a waste! You have just thrown your money away. The children will take these jugs home and put them on a shelf. Dust will settle on them. A spider will weave its web over the slot and not a penny, nickel, or dime will find its way into them."

When the box of jugs was delivered to the home where Macy and her husband were staying, she was so discouraged and had so many doubts about what she had done, that

she pushed the banks under the bed way back near the wall so no one would see them. She didn't want anyone else to ask, "What's in that box?" Sunday morning came and the battle with Satan continued.

When the pledge cards were passed out, Macy felt she should write \$30.00. Again Satan talked to her. "That's a lot of money," he said. "The children can never give that much money and then you will have to give it all yourself." She put the pledge card in her purse and waited until she could pray about it some more.

By afternoon, Macy decided to give the banks to the children after all, in spite of her fears. In the afternoon children's meeting every boy and girl received their first jug. After they were given away, Macy went to the big tent and wrote her pledge for \$60.00 instead of \$30.00!

The first jug breaking was held one year later in 1904 at Swanton, Ohio. The first offering given by the children was \$122.52!

This was the beginning of the missionary program for the Missionary Church children. The "jugs" are now called Acorn Banks. In 1990 nearly 17, 000 banks were given to the boys and girls of the Missionary Church. Some of the boys and girls who grew up in the Missionary Church liked the Acorn Banks and the bank breaking so much that when they grew up and became members or pastors of other denominations they still wanted Acorn Banks. Many of these write each year to have boxes of Acorn Banks sent to them.

Many thousands of dollars have been given to missionary children since the beginning of the missionary program for children back in 1902. Some years as much as \$80,000 or more has been given through the Acorn Bank program.

The money from the Acorn Banks goes mostly for the education of the missionary children in other lands. Some of it is used for their clothing, transportation, and other needs they have as they go with their parents to another land.

Statistics of Acorn Bank Giving:

- In 2004 the total Acorn Bank giving in the Missionary Church was \$ (amount unavailable)
- Giving for the last five years was \$(amount unavailable)
- The West Valley Missionary Church has given:
 - 2001 - \$235.00
 - 2002 - \$701.70
 - 2003 - \$403.78
 - 2004 - \$574.00
 - 2005 - \$303.73 (first of two offerings)

Next Acorn Bank Breaking: Fall of 2005