

Ministry to Children and Youth Forum :: Summary

Question One: Outcomes

As we seek to disciple our children and youth, it is our prayer that each high school graduate leave ECC...

...living a life that displays a strong, growing, authentic relationship with Christ.

...ready to serve, lead and engage the world with a passion for mission, outreach and God's purposes for his or her life.

...strengthened by a strong foundation in God's word and equipped with the necessary tools to continue to build on that foundation for years to come.

...aware of the need for Christian community and committed to seek and nourish relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ as an ongoing part of what it means to follow Jesus.

...equipped to interact with the culture in wisdom, discernment, godliness and from a biblical worldview.

Question Two: Ministry-Shaping Themes

In our desire that the children and youth of ECC leave our community with the above strengths firmly entrenched in their lives, it is our belief that the following values should shape our ministry to them. We value curriculum, programs and ministry initiatives that...

...teach our children and youth that they are called to serve God and others in fulfilling God's mission in the world, even when young, and that they have a place of ministry in the Kingdom of God.

...are systematic in their approach to the mission and vision of discipling and mentoring our children and youth, with an eye to the desired outcomes (above).

...are well-structured and faithfully and rigorously communicated to parents, children and teens.

...develop the importance of community and value small group participation.

...value creativity, relevance and student participation.

...prioritize evangelism to other children and youth in our lives and community.

...value our identity as Covenanters by participation in denominational and conference events.

Question Three: Where Should We Go From Here?

The third question at the forum was phrased as asking, “What to keep, what to stop, what to start?” The first section/heading below, “Keep/Start”, combines comments under those two categories from the forum as they tell us what was seen as important to those present at the forum. The comments collected under the “Stop” category are not all about “stopping” something, and so are listed under the heading, “Needs Improvement”.

The items listed beneath each subheading may be direct quotes or summaries of several statements. The higher up on the list the headings or comments are, the more input/commentary we received on the item listed.

Keep/Start

Structure and Leadership

Strong parental involvement in leadership and support.

Strong team of volunteers made up of people who are called and gifted to minister to youth and children.

Greater definition of the purpose and plan of Children’s and Youth Ministries and more in-depth discussion of the vision and means necessary to take us there.

Well organized ministry structures and activities.

Leadership training for volunteers and teachers.

An active Youth Advisory Board.

Participation of youth in youth group leadership and decision-making.

Hard work by leaders/teachers in preparation, presentation and creativity.

Partnership with other churches that we can join with to see greater returns.

Individual counseling for both males and females as needed.

Fundraisers that our youth take ownership in, that involve the congregation.

Budget plans should allow youth events that don’t require an entry fee.

Good, solid, regular communication about ministry events and plans.

Lead pastor/council oversight of activities and programming.

Identification of current best practices for both Youth and Children’s Ministries.

Continued and expanded use of small groups in Youth Ministry.

Involvement of youth leaders should in Christian Formation and other youth programs for continuity.

Connection of High School students to (college) campus ministries.

Frequency and Nature of Gatherings (Youth)

Regular/weekly large group gatherings for High School and Middle School.

Lots of youth activities in the summer (and year round) when youth are more available.

High School and Middle School meet on same night of the week.

Youth group meeting on a weekend night. Friday night social that is seeker oriented; Sunday night – teaching.

Teaching of deep, biblical truth to our youth.

Mission and Ministry

Provide opportunities for service and fellowship on a regular basis (mission trips, VBS) and offer opportunities for parent/child and intergenerational involvement.

Suggestions Specific to Children's Ministries

Mixing of class groups of elementary age in some structure fashion.

Because of low numbers of nursery workers, it has been suggested that for every child who uses the nursery, their parents(s) should be required to serve in the nursery at least once (we know this increases Jeanne's training responsibilities).

Find a way to get 4th and 5th graders involved in Scripture memory. They are no longer interested.

Incorporation of a large group assembly during Sunday School.

Coordination between Christian Formation, Children's Church and possibly Children's message.

Keep Children's Choir.

Kids' service – build community with the young kids – AWANA, etc.

Miller School – external ministry; not ministry to ECC children.

Role of Youth Pastor

Personal contact of pastor with students, involvement in schools and attendance at extra-curricular activities/events.

Youth Pastor who is focused on ECC youth and youth leaders, without other responsibilities, that might draw them away.

Outreach

Emphasis on evangelism with children and youth – e.g. bring a friend night. Create an outreach mentality.

Strong presence of the gospel (Christian teaching) at special events and usual meeting times.

Student-initiated evangelism.

Teaching and Discipling

Scripture memory through CF classes.

Confirmation.

Mentoring.

Investment of older kids in younger kids.

Participation of High School students in adult Christian Formation classes.

Teaching about Christ and awareness of consequences to actions – addictions, past, what can trap them.

Programming refocused on discipleship of our children.

Covenant Identity

Ongoing participation of our youth in CHIC, Covenant Harbor and retreats offered by the Central Conference.

Student Leadership and Participation

Student involvement in everything -- music, ministry, prayer.

Encouragement and development of Student leadership.

Needs Improvement

Sports groups should not be primary focus of youth groups; more inclusive activities are needed for those who are not athletically inclined.

Tried youth group, nothing there, no meaning, not structured enough.

7th-8th grade years of Confirmation – take it out of the Christian Formation hour and give it its own timeslot.

Stop underestimating the their ability and desire to learn.

Stop distracting youth staff from youth.

There is a lack of cohesiveness – so many changes in the staff.

Not good at promoting the youth programs.

Lack of accountability of youth ministries.