

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY (CYM) TASK FORCE REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS AND JUSTIFICATIONS

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The Children and Youth Ministry (CYM) Task Force was formed by Session in October, 2018 to study and explore opportunities to enhance and grow the Christian Education Programs offered at Green Valley Presbyterian Church (GVPC) to better meet the needs of our youth and young families. The CYM Task Force developed a framework for this process. It entailed developing a variety of questions for children, youth and their families. These questions explored youth and families' current relationship with GVPC, an opportunity to present questions/concerns, and their hopes for future programming for the young people of the congregation. The Task Force met with children, youth and parents in separate group settings. Following a total of eight group meetings, the CYM Task Force met several times to analyze and then utilize this invaluable information to formulate the top six recommendations to more effectively meet the spiritual and social needs of our young parishioners and their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS & JUSTIFICATIONS

- 1. Establish a position of Associate Pastor or Christian Education Director to oversee, direct and provide overall cohesion and coordination of the children, youth, and adult Christian Education programs at GVPC.**

Justification: This was one of the top recommendations strongly endorsed in every meeting with the parents of children and youth. This position would greatly help in enhancing and energizing our children, youth, and adult ministry programs. This position would also assist in the Children's Sermons, planning curriculum, and cultivating involvement of children, youth, families and the congregation in outreach and church programs. Families and youth consistently requested that the leader be energetic, preferably younger, and someone the kids can "relate to." Strong skills in the areas of organization, educational training, and communication were also essential and necessary qualities that any candidate for this position must possess. The majority of participants felt that the leader does not necessarily have to be seminary trained but could possibly be a lay leader or even a student who is currently in seminary. It is worth noting, however, that the search for an associate pastor would entail a more detailed and longer process under the PCUSA requirements.

- 2. Reinstate Sunday School Programs for youth in grades 6 through 12.**

Justification: "Bring back Sunday School!" was passionately voiced by the Youth in both discussion groups. It was also the sentiment shared by youth in grades 6 and 7, who continue attending Sunday School for grades 3-5, but do not attend the Youth Group. Many of the parents feel there is a real need to improve Christian Education for the youth and would welcome a Sunday School curriculum

focused on Bible study in gaining a better understanding of the messages and lessons they impart. Youth also agreed with a Bible study focus and indicated that the message/lesson segment of the Youth Group does not provide enough Christian education as they would like. While the majority would like Youth Sunday School to run concurrently with the 10:30 church service, they seemed receptive to attending a monthly youth-oriented Sunday service discussed in Recommendation 6.

3. Restructure the Youth Program to provide separate programs for the Middle School and High School aged youth.

Justification: As currently structured, the Youth Group Program combines all middle school (Grades 6-8) and high school (Grades 9-12) students under one program. It meets from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm on Sunday afternoons and the time normally includes a meal, games or other fellowship activity, and a lesson. Parents, as well as the youth, said they would like to see more involvement in community outreach and service-related activities as part of the Youth Program. Many parents, as well as some middle school aged youth, stated concern with the age differences in the combined Youth Program and feeling uncomfortable in the structure and setting. With no other youth programs offered on Sundays, the youth are coping in one of three ways: (1) Some are staying back and continuing to participate in the children's (Grades 3-5) Sunday School Program; (2) some are comfortable and are participating in the Youth Program with the high school aged youth; and (3) some simply do not participate in any Youth Program activity. It is this third group that we are in danger of losing, if we have not already lost them. We need age appropriate programs that help transition and involve our varying youth age groups, especially with the size of our congregation.

4. Provide better and more effective communication for parents and youth in sharing information on Christian Education programs, activities, volunteering, teachers/leaders and scheduling.

Justification: The need for improved communications was raised in all of our group discussion sessions. Parents want to know what their kids are doing and want to have schedules and timely information provided for camps, mission trips, and other activities. The youth want a way to easily communicate with each other and to receive information about Youth Group activities. Parents agreed that email or texts would be the best vehicles. The youth suggested setting up a group text capability. Some of the information being sought appears in The Vision newsletter, the GVPC website, and the GVPC Facebook, which we need to regularly publicize and encourage reading. We also need to continually remind our congregation to inform us when any of their contact information changes.

5. Provide more periodic social activities for children and families to foster relationship building.

Justification: This was consistently voiced by parents of young families in the discussion groups and most would like to see easy and fun social gatherings occur once a month. Parents and grandparents of children said, “We want our kids to have church friends they look forward to seeing, and activities that would bring them together more.” Parents expressed they would like to see an effort to build family connections that would last as the kids get older and fun, social gatherings for parents to socialize and get to know each other better. The Sunday School children (Grades 3-5) also said they would like to have more outings with their Sunday School friends both as part of Sunday School class, as well as other times. Sunday afternoons were identified as the best time and, as a start, movies/popcorn at Dana’s place and games in Fellowship Hall were suggested by parents. Other types of activities outside of the church could be explored later. Parents want a coordinator to organize these events; they do not want the responsibility.

6. Incorporate changes to the 10:30 worship service that are more child and youth friendly and encourage attendance and youth participation in aspects of the service.

Justification:

- A. **Children:** Parents of children strongly urged changing the Order of Worship by moving the “Announcements” after the children’s sermon sometime later in the service. Parents said they don’t catch much of the announcements in trying to keep their children “occupied and not being a distraction to others” as they eagerly await the Children’s Sermon. Sunday School teachers also expressed this would greatly assist in allowing enough time for the planned lesson and related activities.
- B. **Youth:** Parents of youth expressed the need for more youth involvement in worship services and encouraging training and invitations to participate as liturgists, greeters, and ushers. A number of our youth are not attending any worship service. It is important that we embrace a welcoming environment and promote continued involvement for all youth and especially for those who have been confirmed and are new members of the church.

Youth were quite vocal that they were unable to relate to many of the hymns and lyrics in the worship service and would like to see the introduction of some mix of recorded or other type of “Contemporary Christian” music with uplifting messages at the second service. Youth also expressed they would like to be seated at times as a group with fellow youth members. Youth were receptive to having one Sunday a month at the 10:30 worship service include a mix of youth focused music and a sermon they could relate to where the youth would attend and participate as liturgist, greeters, and ushers.

In closing, the CYM Task Force wishes to thank the parents, grandparents, children, and youth who shared their valued insight and thoughts represented in this report. We also wish to thank Session for their prayerful consideration in supporting these recommendations for growing and enhancing our Christian Education Programs offered at GVPC. Psalm 71 testifies that a foundation of faith established during childhood helps ensure lifelong faith and service. The patterns and lessons established during these formative years continue to bear fruit throughout a person's life. May God bless our church and congregation in its continuing commitment of helping our children, youth, and young families grow up to proclaim with the Psalmist, "O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds."

In Christ's Service,

Children & Youth Ministries Task Force

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