

SUMMARY REPORT FROM THE  
YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRIES WAY GROUP  
NOVEMBER 7, 2006

The Youth and Family Ministries Way Group is submitting this report to the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Kenosha for its consideration and action. Our recommendations are the result of a process involving much thought and prayer, and we have all learned a great deal about ourselves, each other, the congregation, and God's leading during our time together. We want to thank Pastor Lance and the Session for allowing us to serve in this manner.

The recommendations are based upon certain assumptions and goals that we articulated and agreed to early in our deliberations. They are as follows:

- Educational, fellowship, ministry/service opportunities should be available to all: activities and programs should be designed that meet the needs of all age groups and that make newcomers feel equally welcomed and included as current members.
- Educational, fellowship, ministry/service programs and opportunities should be effectively communicated to all: a comprehensive list that includes the nature of groups and activities, the meeting times for activities, the contact person and the means of contacting her/him, etc. should be available at all times and should be updated on a regular basis (see I-C below).
- Educational programs should be seamless: the biblical and theological content taught in each age/group level should provide the foundation needed for the next age/group level. At times intergenerational programs should be offered that allow us to learn from each other and to increase our sense of community.

Our recommendations will be divided into four major headings: church-wide systems/operations/communications, children, youth, and adults, and the latter three will address matters related to education, fellowship, and ministry/service. They will be presented in that order.

I. Church-wide systems/operations/communications

- A. We recommend that the Session provide leadership in communicating and demonstrating the importance of Christian Education (at all levels).
  - 1. The responsibility of the church to provide programs and the responsibility of the parents to participate should become a prominent element of our congregational "culture." While this should be true

in any church, it is especially important in the Reformed tradition that stresses our need to worship God with heart **and** mind and that is affirmed by parents **and** the congregation at each baptism. While parents have the primary responsibility of the Christian Education of their children, it is the congregation's responsibility to assist in that task. That assistance is provided through

- a. programs and activities for children led by qualified teachers;
  - b. programs and activities for parents that address parenting and Christian education topics.
2. Individuals who teach or lead in programs or activities are vital to the growth of the congregation and those involved in the programs/activities, and they should not feel that they have been conscripted for a life-sentence. Rather they should be assured that their ministry/service is time-limited (teachers get a sabbatical, but they do not have to wait seven years to be eligible!).
- a. Teachers of children and youth should ideally have a term of one year, with a maximum term of two years.
  - b. When not teaching, adults should be involved in programs and activities that are intellectually stimulating and spiritually refreshing.
- B. We can provide the best programs in the world, lead by the best individuals, and offered at times that are convenient for members, but if members and new-comers are not aware of the offerings, nothing is achieved. Moreover, as programs grow and/or change, members need to be made aware of the up-dated opportunities. We therefore recommend that a brochure be created that
1. is frequently up-dated and contains the various activities/groups in the church (e.g., Mariners, Fireside Friends, Parish Nurse, Choir), their meeting times, how one can become involved, and leader/contact information, including phone number and/or e-mail address;
  2. distributed to visitors and available for members;
  3. describes how to submit prayer needs to the Prayer Chain;
  4. reviewed regularly for currency and content by a member of Session.

- C. We recommend that a more thorough registration process be implemented for all minors involved in church activities. The form should
1. be updated annually or more frequently as needed;
  2. be available to (and consulted by) leaders of all activities in which the child/youth participates;
  3. include
    - a. name, address, home and cell phone numbers, e-mail (if available), parent's name, address, home and cell phone numbers, e-mail (if available), child's date of birth, date child began attending church activities, date of baptism (if applicable), and date of confirmation (if applicable); emergency contact information;
    - b. any allergies (especially food or environmental ones) and chronic medical problems that may require adjustment or assistance in activities;
    - c. name(s) of individuals authorized to pick up the child following activities;
    - d. a wallet-sized tear-off section to give to parents with
      - i. times for regularly scheduled activities;
      - ii. rules (e.g., no children running a fever);
      - iii. contact information of the church.
- D. We recommend that the Session begin thinking **now** about the future and the facility and program needs resulting from growth and change. Questions and issues include the following:
1. What are the space needs for a Christian Education program that involves a growing number of children (and may soon require splitting by age and grade and not combining grade levels), a growing number of youth (who may soon need to be divided into junior high and high school groups), and a growing number of adults needing a variety of course offerings?
  2. What issues arise for Christian Education if our growth or our spiritual needs requires two worship services?

3. How do we recruit and train Christian Education leaders as we grow?
4. How do we know at what point we need a Youth Minister or a Director of Christian Education or a Worship Leader or ...? How do we prioritize those needs?

## II. Children

- A. We recommend that congregational/visitor awareness be raised concerning the programs and activities for children. Some of our suggestions include the following:
  1. “advertise” (brochures, posters, fliers, web-site) activities and programs for children within the congregation and in the neighborhood;
  2. remind the congregation of opportunities through announcements during the worship service;
  3. regularly and repeatedly remind the congregation that adult involvement in the Christian Education of our children is
    - a. a priority;
    - b. a responsibility of everyone, not just parents of children in a particular age group;
    - c. not a life-time sentence;
  4. create opportunities for children to contribute to the worship and life of the congregation through activities such as
    - a. developing children’s choirs/children’s bell choir;
    - b. serving as acolytes (from 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up);
    - c. sharing with the congregation on a scheduled basis what they have learned.
- B. We recommend that facilities/personnel resources be identified so that
  1. nursery care/toddler care is available for **both** worship service and Sunday School time;

2. toddler care (2-3 year olds) is more than baby-sitting and truly involves some Christian education;
  3. children can have an area in the library for children's books and reading;
  4. visiting children and their parents can meet before Sunday School and be informed about the program and opportunities the church provides for children;
  5. areas for learning, crafts, playing, and worship can be developed in ways appropriate for children's needs.
- C. We recommend that the children's curriculum and its delivery be reviewed with the goal that all children
1. understand the Bible and its stories from beginning to end. This should include
    - a. a revision of the current rotation model that reduces the amount of time spent on one story;
    - b. a curriculum that insures that children learn not just "stories" but also "the Biblical story;"
    - c. memorization and understanding of Bible verses/passages (pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade) and the Apostles' Creed (6<sup>th</sup> grade) and presentation of their learning to the congregation;
    - d. more use of the Bible during story time (children should be encouraged to bring their Bibles to church);
  2. learn using a variety of methods including
    - a. drama;
    - b. types of prayer (praise/requests/thanksgiving) and styles (sentence prayers/singing/silent);
    - c. songs that reinforce the lesson;
    - d. age-appropriate pedagogy (no "Veggie-Tales" for 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders);

3. can continue their learning at home by the
    - a. church's communicating with parents concerning the curriculum;
    - b. teachers' providing parents with materials to reinforce the Sunday School lessons at home;
  4. be recognized for their learning and participation on a church-wide Children's Day.
- D. We recommend that fellowship opportunities be provided for
1. multi-age activities to get together for fellowship or ministry/service (with limited TV/Video);
  2. a non-Sunday morning fellowship activity for 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders (with limited TV/Video);
  3. parents and children to get together (e.g., eat a meal together and then children gather together and parents gather together separately);
  4. "older" youth to interact with the children and provide ministry/service (e.g., if item D-2 were happening, they could supervise children, organize games, and reinforce Sunday School lessons);
  5. older youth "buddy/mentor" younger children;
  6. parent-child groups to come together on weekdays (e.g., something like MOPS—**M**others **O**f **P**re-**S**choolers).
- E. We recommend that ministry/service be built into the curriculum so that children have the opportunity to be involved and understand why they should be involved. Examples of involvement could include
1. tours for visitors/new members (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders; youth could also be involved here);
  2. Team Tannenbaum;
  3. Nursing Home visits (especially if there is a children's choir or children's bell choir);
  4. singing in the worship service;

5. learning about and participating in stewardship through One Great Hour of Sharing and correspondence/involvement with mission partners;
6. prayer partners/prayer teams;
7. making and distributing lunch bags/cards for shut-ins or people who have been absent.

### III. Youth

- A. We recommend that the Youth curriculum
  1. build on the children's curriculum;
  2. prepare the youth for confirmation;
  3. continue to build on the foundation laid at confirmation for continued involvement into adulthood;
  4. emphasize not just memorization, but meaning and application ("How does this Biblical teaching apply to me/my life?" "I have this problem; what does Scripture say?");
  5. include visits to other churches to learn about/respect their beliefs while understanding how Presbyterians are both alike and different.
  
- B. We believe that it is extremely important that the Youth Group have an identity (e.g., they have chosen their name—Church Monkeyz, they have painted their room, they may need a youth T-Shirt). To that end, we recommend that
  1. the youth continue to be helped to balance their sense of identity with a willingness to welcome new individuals and encourage growth;
  2. weekly evening activities be continued;
  3. the youth explore acquiring resources such as a youth song book to aid in youth worship;

4. monthly activities (e.g., field trips) be continued with these caveats: care is taken about costs to families (especially if there is more than one child per family and/or if the youth are encouraged to invite friends) and, where possible, the activities are linked to education (this does **not** mean they can't be fun!);
5. facilities for youth be designated that will allow games (especially ones that build the sense of group), "hanging out," and activities with youth groups from other churches;
6. the congregation publicly recognize important transitions in the life of the youth (e.g., moving from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 7<sup>th</sup> grade; moving from junior high to high school; graduating from high school; going to college; graduating from college).
7. the directory include the addresses of college age members so that
  - a. *Tower Topics* and other church information can be sent to them;
  - b. members can be reminded to communicate with the students and continue to make the students feel a part of the congregation.

C. We recommend that

1. the youth be allowed/encouraged to organize fund raisers for mission/service activities as well as for youth group needs;
2. musical opportunities for the youth be expanded (e.g., choir, small group ensembles, band) and utilized in congregational settings;
3. opportunities for youth involvement in service projects be identified (e.g., Youth Ministry Teams for members needing yard work, gutters cleaned, snow removal [this could be combined with an Auction of youth members to help raise money for mission/service activities or youth group needs]; Soup Kitchen Volunteers; Nursing Home visits/ caroling, tours of building/directions for visitors);
4. the Youth Group commit to tithing any funds raised for the youth group and give them to mission partners or other service programs;
5. a Youth Advisor Delegate be appointed to Session.

#### IV. Adults

- A. We recommend that a comprehensive Adult Education program be developed. Such a program should provide
1. “courses/classes” at a variety of times and settings to meet members needs (e.g., home and church; Sunday morning, Sunday evening, weekdays at various times; monthly or bimonthly groups for people with tight schedules);
  2. small group Bible studies;
  3. “courses” or “series” to meet particular needs (e.g., for new or potential members—Presbyterianism 101; classes for new parents or newly married; how to help one’s children grow in faith; teen-agers and their issues; financial/legal issues at different stages of life);
  4. intergenerational study/reading groups.
- B. We recommend that personal study be encouraged and aided by
1. providing information on choosing a good Bible translations and on the difference between translations/versions/paraphrases;
  2. encouraging members of the congregation to bring their Bibles on Sundays;
  3. making the lectionary available (weekly? monthly? newsletter? separate brochure?);
  4. making the Scripture text for Pastor Lance’s sermons available in *Tower Topics* each month;
  5. updating, expanding, and cataloguing library holdings.
- C. We recommend that Session identify the institutional knowledge within the congregation and
1. create a History Committee;
  2. provide opportunities to celebrate our past in the context of where God is leading us today.

- D. We recommend that fellowship be strengthened by
1. more frequent fellowship dinners/suppers;
  2. creating a “Senior Fellowship” luncheon on a regular basis (monthly?);
  3. creating a young persons group;
  4. creating a group for young adults (post-college);
  5. continuing weekly coffee hours;
  6. creating a men’s group;
  7. holding retreats for specified groups (e.g., married, single parents, young singles).
- E. We recommend that the church identify and develop skills and knowledge within the congregation and
1. encourage individuals with common skill/knowledge to form Ministry Teams;
  2. encourage the individuals in Ministry Teams to help develop skills and knowledge of those who want to learn;
  3. publicize how members who need help can contact Ministry Team members who can help them.
- F. We recommend that a Ministry Team of mentors be organized to
1. work with visitors, youth, engaged couples, new parents, or other individuals who could benefit from wise, experienced mentors;
  2. promote targeted fellowship these identified groups/individuals.
- G. We recommend that a survey of transportation needs be developed and a coordinator be appointed to assist those needing help by matching them with those willing to provide transportation;

- H. We recommend that the Deacons coordinate an “emergency meal” ministry by
  - 1. having frozen meals kept in freezer;
  - 2. providing information as to how one can get on the emergency meal need list (getting on this list would also activate the prayer chain).
  
- I. We recommend that the Deacons coordinate a systematic follow-up for prayer chain requests that includes
  - 1. continued contact with the person(s) making requests until the need is met or over;
  - 2. a quarterly report to Session stating the number of prayers requests submitted and the ways in which prayers were answered.
  
- J. We recommend that the Mission Committee expand the congregation’s involvement with missionaries and organizations by
  - 1. regular updates concerning the activities and needs of currently supported missionaries/organizations and the work of the PCUSA in missions (e.g., by using the Mission Prayer Calendar, articles in *Tower Topics*, information from the Presbytery’s Mission Committee);
  - 2. providing opportunities for personal involvement (e.g., like the Katrina group, Habitat for Humanity).

In some cases, responsibility for implementing the recommendation has been directed to a particular group (e.g., Session). In other instances, we believe that Session can best determine who should be charged with the task.

Respectfully submitted,

Youth and Family Ministries Way Group