

Philosophy of Youth Ministry Grace Community Church of Seal Beach

A philosophy of ministry document is intended to provide high-level guidance for a ministry at Grace Community Church of Seal Beach. It helps communicate to leaders, volunteers, participants and any other stakeholders the mission, values, strategy and measures of a successful ministry, so there is clarity in the ministry's purpose. It provides guidance to leaders as they make decisions on the use of resources and seek to understand whether they are, under God, meeting the expectations of church leadership.

The parts of this document are defined as follows:

Mission - What are the outcomes expected of the ministry? What is it trying to accomplish?

Values - All the ministries should be intentionally supportive of one or more of the five All-church values in addition to the Youth-specific values.

Strategy - What are the methods that will be used to accomplish the mission and instill the values with the participants of this ministry?

Measures - How will we measure the success of the ministry?

I. Mission

The underlying mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20). Unique to youth ministry is a transition from childhood into adulthood, during which students develop a sense of individual identity, distinct from their parents. Part of that development includes a decision point of whether to make a lifelong commitment to follow Jesus. Therefore, the mission of youth ministry at Grace Community Church of Seal Beach is:

To help middle and high school students become lifelong followers of Jesus Christ who find their identity in him (UP - Gospel), their place in his family, the church (IN - Community), and their joy in joining his work in the world (OUT - Mission).

II. Values

All-Church Values

- Participatory Worship - Have I made time for God today?
- Biblical Worldview - Does my life reflect growing obedience to God's Word?
- Known by Name - Am I cultivating authentic relationships?
- Faithful Compassion - How am I expressing God's love to others?
- Missional Life - Who am I helping to know God?

In addition to the all-church values, there are youth-specific values that will be instilled in youth ministry at our church. Because adolescence is often a time of searching for identity, a longing to be loved, and a questioning of authority, students often wonder who they are, what makes them special, where they belong and what their life is to be about. Acknowledging this unique season of life, we long to instill these four youth-specific values in our students:

Youth- Specific Values

- Identity in Christ - Students learn that their identity comes from their relationship with God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ - a faith that is their own, carries them through life's challenges, and is based on God's unconditional love for them, not their own goodness or efforts.
- A place to belong - Being welcomed by a group of peers and caring adult staff and volunteers is a great introduction to the rest of the church family. Students learn that because of Jesus Christ, they are brought into the body of Christ (the church) where they're loved and provided for. Lord willing, this experience will inspire lifelong community and service in the local church.
- Connected to others - Building relationships that are characterized by meaningful conversations, shared experiences, and lots of fun will keep the kids coming back for more. This connection is often the start of a young person's openness to the church and the Lord of the church, Jesus.
- Outwardly focused - Recognizing that what Jesus has done for them isn't to end with them, students will be encouraged and given opportunities to share their faith and to show their faith. The gospel that brings them into the church is the same gospel that sends them out to the world. Participating in God's worldwide mission is the great responsibility and joy of every follower of Jesus.

III. Strategy

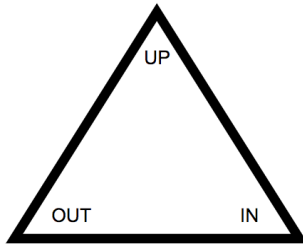
In order to accomplish the mission and to instill the values listed above, the following strategies will be in place for Youth Ministry.

- (Grow) Develop Christian community - We will have regular Sunday and mid-week gatherings emphasizing the unconditional love and belonging that students crave. A biblical worldview grows and Christian community is developed as students learn how to study the Bible, practice prayer, are engaged in worship and are connected with peers and mentors in small groups.
- (Invite) Conduct regular, attractational events - We will provide opportunities for students to bring their unchurched friends to an environment where they can be themselves, feel a sense of control and enjoy being with their peers. In addition, we will offer age-specific and all-church retreats that make space to hear from God and consider His call on their lives.
- (Serve) Do for others - We will help students learn to serve as disciples of Jesus, either with their peers, with those younger than themselves and, with guidance, throughout the broader church. Also, we'll encourage them to see that their service extends to the world and we'll provide opportunities through outreach events and ministries of the church to love their neighbors as themselves.
- (Stick) Emphasize intergenerational relationships - We will connect each student with 5 adults who know and love Jesus, both within youth ministry and throughout the larger church body. Our adult volunteers play a huge role in this happening. These connections will be based on common interests with the goal of fostering discipleship and instilling a lifelong desire for Christian community.

- (Partner) Work together with parents - We will do this by having accessible youth and pastoral staff, hosting events (in cooperation with the Associate Pastor) on parenting issues related to adolescents, and providing parents with dates and details related to the youth ministry calendar.

IV. Measures

It's hard to measure what's happening in the heart of anyone, including youth. That being said, consider this helpful diagnostic tool.



UP - emphasizes our relationship with God
 IN - emphasizes our relationships with other Christians
 OUT - emphasizes our relationship with the unsaved world

We know the students are...

Growing UP

- When they're spending their own time with God and growing in obedience to God's Word
- When they're committing or recommitting their lives to Christ; being baptized
- When their parents are testifying to their growing faith and love of God

Leaning IN

- When they're cultivating authentic relationships with peers and mentors (note the % of students connected to at least 5 Christian adults outside of their parents)
- When they're regularly present at meetings, events and service opportunities (note the % of students serving in the church outside of youth ministry)
- When they're sacrificially loving one another as Jesus commanded (note how active students are at welcoming and including new students)

Moving OUT

- When their compassion for the poor and needy is present and growing
- When they're bringing their non-churched friends to meetings and events
- When they're communicating the gospel to their friends through their words and their lives

Helpful Resources

- *Sticky Faith* by Kara Powell and Chap Clark
- *Can I ask that?: 8 hard questions about God and faith (guide)* by Jim Candy and Brad Griffin
- *Think Orange* by Reggie Joiner
- *It's Just a Phase -- So Don't Miss It: Why Every Life Stage of a Kid Matters and at Least 13 Things Your Church Should Do About It* by Reggie Joiner and Kristen Ivy
- *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry* by Mark Yarhouse
- *Understanding Your Young Teen* by Mark Oestreicher
- *Speaking to Teenagers* by Doug Fields