

Youth WIN Team Meeting Minutes April 18, 2018

In attendance: Pastor Jim Peich, John Cargile, Mary Beth Harper, Chuck Healy, Kem Mogannam, Genny Schumacher, Ivy Williams.

On the team, but not present: Beth Boemler and Jeff Woodhouse.

We briefly discussed the goal of having 100 middle and senior high youth actively engaged at MUMC during a week.

1. We questioned whether that means the presence 100 *unique* people, or simply 100 *occurrences*, and we decided that it should mean that 100 different/unique people are here.
2. We pointed out that we are talking about all activities throughout the week, not just Sunday night youth group.
3. We asked whether attendance at off-campus activities should count toward the goal (we thought it should), and if non-MUMC special events (like SLUMP) should count.
4. The opinion was expressed that MUMC is obsessed with “numbers.” *Is attendance the only way to judge how “well” the youth program is doing??*

Pastor Jim commented that answering some of these questions should be part of deciding if the goal is achievable as stated, which will be addressed during our next meeting.

We discussed why increasing youth engagement at MUMC is important.

1. A youth's experience in church and at youth activities positively impacts their life spiritually, emotionally, and socially, and can help them “stay on the right path” when they encounter unhealthy influences.
2. It can help them be a positive influence on other people in their lives; not only their family, friends, and classmates, but also strangers, and even people they will never meet.
3. We are planting seeds.
4. We are creating a sense of mission.
5. All that aside, from a biblical standpoint, we are called to spread the gospel and make disciples for Christ, and having youth involved at MUMC is one way to do that.

Some of the information that we need to gather to inform our efforts:

1. *Who is our market??* Is it the youth in MUMC only? If not, how would we go about reaching out to other youth? *Who are they??* Unchurched? Atheist/agnostic? Where are they?
2. What are the needs of our market? Spiritual? Social? Emotional? Other?
3. How many potential/eligible youth (in grades 6 to 12) do we have in our church families now? How many are not involved in youth activities? Why? Schedule conflicts? Bad experiences in a youth program (either MUMY *or another*)? No friends in youth activities at church? Don't like the experience? Other?
4. Look at our programming—what do youth like or not like about it? What could we change in order to better meet the most needs of the most youth? Content? Day of week? Time of day? Location??
5. What has worked well for us in the past? What is working well for us now?
6. What is working well for other churches?

Things to think more about:

1. Are we trying to run too big of a program? Should we have less “stuff”, but better quality?
2. Is it better to have 10 youth doing 10 activities each, or 100 youth each doing one activity?
3. Do we need more staff to handle everything well? (This doesn't have to mean *paid* staff!)

What we know that will work in our favor:

1. There have been times in MUMC's past when participation in the youth program was higher.
2. There are other churches with well-attended youth programs.
3. Bonds are crucial.
4. Adult connection to youth is important.
5. The youth director needs to be an approachable person.
6. Youth group should be FUN.
7. Nancy Wilson's "The Four Fs: Food, Fun, Fellowship, Flexibility."
8. Social media is HUGE. Can we have a presence there that will reach our target in different/better ways from what we're doing now? (Involve Phil Wiseman.)
9. Younger youth look up to older youth. Have older tell their stories of how the youth program has affected them (helped them get through tough times, form lasting friendships, etc.). (College-age youth talk to senior high; senior high talk to mid high.)

What we know that will provide challenges for us:

1. Our youth department has had a lack of consistency; there have been three youth directors over approximately a 10-year period. (The point was made that the average time that a youth director stays at a church is 18-24 months.)
2. Some youth have very busy schedules, with a lot of activities that are competing for their time and energy. Can/Should we try to provide more activities at different times throughout the week (like Herb's Bible Breakfast), to provide more options for youth to connect with MUMC and each other?
3. There is more (and easier) exposure to negative influences (like on social media) that make going to church less popular/acceptable.
4. How do we retain more of the Confirmation Youth??? (Do they still attend church service with their family, but just have no interest in youth group? If so, that counts as engagement!)
5. How do we retain the younger youth (like Music Makers age) as the age up through the church? "Bridge" programs like SGO (Sixth Grade Only), J.U.M.P. (Junior United Methodist Persons), etc.
6. Different ages have different needs. How do we serve all their needs well if they are all together in one program?
7. How do we connect today's society to church-ish discussions? Do youth want to read the Bible?

Internal resources we can engage for insights/experience/wisdom:

Former MUMC youth directors; youth currently and previously involved in our youth program.

External resources we can engage for insights/experience/wisdom:

Churches around our area with well-attended programs.

Books/publications on the subject.

Next steps (homework):

1. Talk to former youth directors at MUMC (Nancy Cooper, Nancy Wilson) about what they did as youth directors here, and what they thought was successful. – Mary Beth
2. Talk to the leaders of youth groups at other churches (efree [First Free Church], St. John, The Gathering, The Crossing?) about what is successful in their programs. – Ivy (efree), Genny (The Gathering)
3. Talk to our current youth about what they like/dislike about the program now, and any suggestions they have for improving it. – Adult leaders at youth group
4. Reach out to youth who used to attend here, but have dropped away, and see if they would share the reason(s) why they left. What did they like about the program? What caused them to stop coming? If it was not simply a schedule conflict, was it a change in program content? A change in leadership? (Both?) If they are not familiar with what we're doing now, would they be interested in

t

r

y

i

n

d