

To complement what is taught in the '*2B Adult Ministry Stream: Mission Minded Discipleship*' – which lays the theological and structural parameters in points 1-5.

## **6. Some Practicalities**

### **A. Books**

- *Relational Children's Ministry: turning Kid-influencers into lifelong disciple makers*, by Dan Lovaglia, 2016, Zondervan
- *Show them Jesus: Teaching the Gospel to Kids*, by Jack Klumpenhowe, 2014, New Growth Press

### **B. Faith and Knowledge**

The framework of faith, knowledge, service, mission is extremely helpful for us as we help our children to grow. But for children, it is more than a simple linear progression beginning with faith and progressing through the others; it might be very difficult to place a child in one spot on that linear progression. And another question altogether about when a child moves from a faith that comes from (and is often in) family and community to their own personal faith in Jesus. And often we won't know that until they are much older.

With the children in our churches, faith and knowledge go hand in hand. Some children will have lots of knowledge but no faith, some will have faith and no knowledge. Most will have some measure of both. As they grow up within our church community, our desire is that both faith and knowledge are growing and both will contribute to the other; that knowledge about Jesus will produce faith and that faith will inspire a desire for more knowledge, insight, wisdom and discernment.

Some may appear actively involved in service and/or mission (and be inviting all their friends to hear about Jesus) but may not have faith themselves. Being part of a church community since birth often means they will learn to behave according to the patterns of behaviour that are taught, modelled and expected; with or without personal faith. That is OK. We pray that faith will grow too, in God's timing.

Don't worry so much about where they 'fit' on a 'line' but rather how we can be growing them in each aspect; most important, though, is their faith. For each child we need to be thinking about growing them in their faith so that through the time they spend in our children's ministry their faith becomes strong and personal. And we believe that God will work through his word by his spirit to produce that faith in them...

so we keep teaching his word. We don't teach his word for the sake of increasing knowledge, though that happens, we teach it to inspire faith.

### **C. Pray personally for each child**

Praying that God will move them on in their spiritual journey is very important because God is so much more powerful than anything we can do.

**There are a series of questions to ask that may help diagnose how you choose to act.**

#### **I. A prior question for Kids' Church**

Our primary context for Children's ministry is our Sunday Kids' Church (Kids@MtRiv, SPARKS, EMBERS, FLAME, CROSSFIRE). If we are ever going to be able to help them grow in faith, in knowledge, in service and in mission, they need to be settled and engaged at Kids' Church. Most of the time we are able to spend with children is on that Sunday morning. It is not easy to arrange to spend time with them outside of a Sunday morning, and in some cases, not appropriate. This time is so important. So while the question of 'are they engaged on Sunday mornings?' on one hand seems unrelated to their spiritual lives, on the other, it is really important for whether we can help them grow in their spiritual lives.

- ***What have you noticed?***

Child comes regularly with their family but always sits at the back by themselves.

- ***What might be the reason?***

- They don't know any else and are lonely.
- It could be a different reason: they might get overwhelmed with crowds, or they might find people too complicated (and be happy by themselves) or life is very difficult at home right now.

- ***How can you move them on?***

They need to get to know some other children.

- Speak to some other families about inviting their family over for lunch so this child can get to know someone outside of church or arranging for this child to come and play.

- Speak to another child about sitting with them looking after them. See if you can find a child with shared interests.
- What else could you do?

Go back to the other possible reasons for their behaviour and consider how you might be able to move them forward with those.

If children are not engaged with what is happening in Kids' Church they may be bored or over excited or lonely. But there may be more complicated reasons to do with personal development. If they seem to be struggling, talk to their parents. Say, 'Sarah seemed to be struggling in our group today. Is there anything we can do to support her more?' Parents may or may not be able to help. We also have some great Occupational Therapists in our congregations who may be able to give you some advice as well.

## **II. Two questions to ask - faith**

Every child will have a different journey to personal faith and in faith. What one says and does will be different from another. Be mindful about what each child says and does. Think

- ***What have I noticed about this child's faith?***
- ***How can I move them on?***

Here are some examples of the sorts of things you might notice.

- ***What have I noticed about this child's faith?***
  - *Bobby said that God is always angry with him*
  - *Andrew said that he prays every morning*
  - *Katie said that God doesn't care her sister who is sick*
  - *Christopher said that he isn't good enough for God*
  - *Zoe didn't want to pray out loud*
  - *Emily said that she doesn't believe in God and that the bible isn't true*

- *Luke said that he knows God loves him because Jesus died for him.*
- *Bella said that Jesus is the boss of her life and she tries to live his way but doesn't know how*
- *Harry says he just can't see God and doesn't know if he is there*
- *Elias is really angry and often says spiteful things but seems to know all the right answers.*

*These things might demonstrate no faith, no interest, no faith but interested/confused, a true but struggling faith (I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief) or a maturing faith. At each stage we want to move them along.*

- ***How can I move them on?***

- *Are their songs you could sing in Kids' Church that help answer the struggle/question/issue the child has? You could set up a spotify playlist and share with their family.*
- *Can you give them a book to read that would help them with their struggle?*
- *Can you talk to them during craft/game time?*
- *Can you give them a personal bible reading guide to help them read the bible for themselves at home? Or even a bible if they don't have one.*
- *Can you give them the opportunity to respond to the gospel during Kids' Church?*

### **III. Two questions to ask - knowledge**

Our kids' church curriculum is a massive help here. It is designed to move children along in their knowledge, developing a knowledge of who Jesus is and what he has done to save us. Our constant prayer is that through the teaching his word and by his spirit, God would produce faith in our children. At the same time we hope that faith would grow in knowledge, insight, wisdom and discernment. Because of this we ask the same questions about their knowledge.

- ***What have I noticed about this child's knowledge?***

- Joshua knows the right answers to every question and is very proud
- Billy always looks confused and doesn't answer anything
- Anna doesn't seem to know any of the stories in the Old Testament
- Charlie is confused about the order of the bible
- Shahr has lots of questions about the Trinity
- Lee learns all the memory verses really quickly

- Stephanie loves to read the bible and learn from Jesus

- ***How can I move them on?***

*The best way to move them on in knowledge is for them to be engaging well with what happens at Kids' Church. If they are not engaging, think about those issues first.*

- *Do I need to have "go deeper?" questions prepared*
- *Would it be helpful to have a visual/poster present in the room either of the books of the bible or a bible timeline so that they can be referred to to try and minimise confusion*
- *Is there a book I could give them to read?*
- *Can I challenge them to learn longer memory verses?*
- *What about a question box and question time so there is a chance for them to ask those difficult questions - and have them answered.*

#### **IV. Two questions to ask - service**

In a Kids' Church community some children are ready to serve as believers and some just because they belong to this community. It's not appropriate to tell children they can't help out because they are not believers. At the same time, there are things to be discerning about. For instance, if you ask children to lead the group in prayer, it should be children who have faith in Christ. It is also appropriate to be particularly encouraging children who are Christian to be involved in Christian service not just at Kids' Church but in all aspects of their lives. Motivations will be mixed so let's pray they will moved from a 'just being involved' or 'duty' to serving out of love and excitement.

- ***What have I noticed about this child's service?***

- Daniel always comes early and offers to help
- Micah has strong faith but is shy about being out the front.
- Vivien is very confident but is new and you don't know whether or not they believe in Jesus.
- Rachel waits to be asked to do something but is always compliant.
- Philip is always volunteering for everything.

- ***How can I move them on?***

- *Thank and praise them for their help and tell them how they see God's love shining through when they love God's people like that.*
- *How can they participate in our group time at Kids' Church? Can they pray or read the bible or run an activity or do the actions?*
- *Could they help set up or pack up? Could they service morning tea? Vacuum? Clean tables?*
- *Can I ask a group of children to be particularly thinking about 'welcoming'?*
- *How can I encourage them to serve their Mum/Dad/brother/sister at home?*
- *Is there a way this child could be involved in our main gathering?*
- *Can the group do things together? Weed the church gardens? Rake the leaves? Offer to do the vacuuming in church one time.*

## **V. Two questions to ask - mission**

There are many opportunities for Kids' Church to be involved in God's mission to see unbelievers come to Christ. We can be involved in evangelism ourselves and also in supporting the work of other evangelists and missionaries. As you think about these questions, remember that it may say more about the child's parents than the child themselves - but they will be learning from their parents. We also want to be seeing a child involved in mission because they love Jesus and want to see him glorified as other people come to know and love him too. But they may be at a stage where they do it because they trust their parents or leaders and follow their suggestion and example or because they copy their friends. So let's pray they would move from the latter reasons to the former.

It might be worth not just asking these two questions about individual children, but also about our group as a whole!

- ***What have I noticed about this child's mission?***

- Melanie brings along the same friend to church each week.
- Lachlan has said that none of his friends are believers so there's no point bringing them to church.
- Ting said that she tries to tell her friends about Jesus but they don't understand
- Trevor brings along many different friends to Kids' Church.
- Louise doesn't think people need to know Jesus

- Adam talks about being a missionary to Africa
- Jessica talks about her cousins who are missionaries in France

- ***How can I move them on?***

- How can we encourage children to invite friends to Kids' Church? And explain why
- How can we make Kids' Church welcoming of those friends?
- Can we have special invite-your-friend events?
- How can we help a child learn to explain the gospel? Is there suitable tracts?
- Can we role play inviting a friend/telling a friend the gospel?
- Can we have missionaries visit? Or other mission-type groups?
- Can we have suitable books to give to children for different ages that encourage a mission heart and mind?

## **VI. Develop a set of questions to ask each child**

It would be terrific to develop a set of questions you could ask a child so that you get an idea of where they are at. Here are some examples of questions in each of the categories; some suitable for younger children and some for older children (you could probably come up with better ones). Think about the children you disciple (their age and their ability) and develop a set of five questions that you could ask them to help you know how they are going. Consider what their answers could be and what that tells you about them. But when would you ask these questions? During craft time!! The good thing about craft is that a child is seated in one spot, occupied and still. It's when you can talk and ask questions like these. If you've never been convinced about the need for craft, be convinced now.

### ***About being settled and engaged at Kids' Church***

- What do you like about coming to Kids' Church?
- What do you find difficult about Kids' Church?
- What would you change about Kids' Church?

### ***About faith***

- Who loves you?

- What do you think God is like?
- Do you think that Jesus died for **you**? Why/why not?
- Do you think you are following Jesus in your life? Why do you say that? Would you like to?
- Do you think God is pleased with you? Why/why not?

### ***About knowledge***

- Do you have any questions about what we have learnt?
- If you go into heaven just to ask God a question and come back again, what would it be?
- Is there are part of the bible you don't understand?
- What stops people from believing in Jesus?
- Who is Jesus?

### ***About service***

- What would Jesus like you to do when ...
- How could you help your friend/brother/sister/Mum/Dad?
- How can you help at Kids' Church?
- How could we make new children at Kids' Church feel welcome?

### ***About mission***

- Do many of your friends believe in Jesus?
- Who needs to know that Jesus loves them?
- Who would you like to come to Kids' Church with you?
- Do you think you could ask \_\_\_\_ to come to Kids' Church?