

Open Strategy Meeting 4th November 2009 at the United Church, Winchester 7-9pm

MISSING? Children and Young People from the Methodist Church

In 10 years will we have made a difference?

What are the strategies that are working well in your church or circuit?

- How do we define success?
- Do we see strategy as something planned or something that happens by accident or by God?
- Younger children are starting to come, how did they hear about activities? – Perhaps school assemblies
- Outreach in schools e.g. helping with reading, teachers network, school visits to churches
- Putting in the effort with 'quality' materials, food etc Children notice quality, notice way they are received
- Important you feel wanted as a young person (well actually applies to all!)
- Activities? Trad and Junior church running in parallel
- Early service becoming more trad, main service increasingly contemporary
- Open professional approach
- Church that will build us up, don't underestimate us....
- Hot seating.... Very deep even in year 4, no patronising.
- Meon Valley
- Decision to appoint a youth worker long term 10 years
- Generational work - stay with the work long term - notice turn over of youth work posts can be a problem.
- Quality comes out of consistency.
- District helping with finance
- Messy church, working, enjoying it, listening to them, growing through child network.
- Resources important and letting yp lead themselves
- Membership classes when its "right" for yp
- Staggering funding to maintain work

What are your struggles?

- Worship
 - YP not liking family services/All Age Worship its either boring or too deep and can rarely connect, and children hate being called up to the front to 'help'
 - Trying to put a little modernity in to a 'traditional' hymn sandwich
 - Trying to bring together young and old
 - No children except the occasional visitor and then no regular helpers
 - Churches wanting a 'children's slot' before the children are dismissed
 - Interactive worship followed by traditional can lead to separate congregations
 - Preachers not having enough training in all age input (in some cases no training at all!)
- Volunteers
 - Lack of
 - Getting them trained
 - Retaining them so that work can be developed
 - Age range of church members (60+) not wanting to or not being able to volunteer
- Trying to understand the culture of children/yp
- Apathy of young people
- Encouraging the large numbers of yp participating in midweek work into Sunday worship
- 3 out of 7 churches in circuit having no children – how do we begin to reach out to youngsters
- Maintaining contact with children/yp as they grow up
- Lots of yp 'crossing our threshold', how do we share our faith with them?

What do you think should be informing the District's strategy for children and youth ministry?

- Resources allocation from District
- Leadership from District
- Strategy for smaller churches
- Someone from the church always in a group to be the bridge
- Leadership of church have to have the heart to engage with this
- Central to the work of the church
- Bridge person/link person is critical with those who use our premises and other gatherings within area
- District strategy for this... Applied across the churches
- Challenge motivation if churches are just preserving status quo and are not welcoming or relevant
- Learn from churches who are more successful in this field.. E.g. Baptist, new frontiers, etc
- What brings people in is wow factor of Christians living the Christian life in a public way
- Circuits reflect their strengths and interests
- Contemporary worship is not always welcoming to young people
- Cafe is probably more attractive. Breakfast works well!
- Heart for the community
- Support for 'FX' where its being done well
- Supers giving freedom, worship strategically planned for consistency and quality i.e. local plan using carefully chosen leaders.
- Request for more open meetings.. District organise more on other issues too.... Listening

How are the voices of children and young people heard in our decision-making group?

- Not much as they vote with their feet
- By having yp on church councils / circuit meetings / district groups
- By older people being more willing to listen
- A post-box for yp to leave suggestions for future work or comments about their own lives
- Youth participation works when yp can relate. Most church meetings are irrelevant
- YP drive the youth program by inputting ideas
- YP can be overworked by being put on every committee – some cease contact with the Methodist Church
- Social services ask for views of looked after children over a meal
- Facebook
- By listening and hearing
- Not by setting up structures that are not needed
- Joining up with things that are happening elsewhere e.g. joint events where circuits are considering federations
- Good relationships with youth workers who can share yp's views with the wider church
- Adults setting a good example by talking to people in the other churches in the circuit
- Why are the majority of youth reps on committee children of the manse?
- Having district events – works for some groups and not for others

Where do we go next?