

Next Steps for Our Next Gen

By now, you may have heard that Justin Hall, our youth director, has received and accepted a call from First Presbyterian (ECO) in Houston, Texas. I am so excited for him because I remember being involved in the decision to hire him as the youth director when I served as the Associate Pastor to the Next Generation at SGPC. While it means more transition for us, I am certain of God's call on Justin's life and also for our church.

Here is what our session and I are working on. We invite you to pray for us as we navigate this change.

Last Sunday, April 6th, before the church email went out and before Justin spoke with those in our youth ministry, I called an informal meeting with our session to discuss possible next steps. We talked about three specific areas that need to be addressed. No decision was reached because this was not a "called session meeting." Here's what we talked about:

1. We need a communication plan so that the youth parents, students, and church family can be updated...
 - a. So that the church can pray with us
 - b. So that the church is informed as much as possible regarding our next steps.
 - c. So that the best decision for our next youth director can be made.
 - i. Session loves our students and their families! It is their desire to come alongside the youth ministry while we transition. I was reminded about some history that might be helpful as we go forward.
 1. Our recent "Compelling Call Report" indicated that youth ministry was one of our highest priorities
 2. When I was here before, I was hired as the first "Next Generation Pastor" because there was vision for the future that included our children's and youth departments "blurring the lines" so that greater collaboration in discipleship could happen.
 3. The original purpose for the construction of the Lighthouse was so that our youth could have a space to gather, worship, and fellowship together.
2. We need a continuation plan so that the youth summer calendar already scheduled can be properly sourced with volunteers.
 - a. Session has committed to come alongside three youth ministry deacons who are leading the large, medium, and small environments according to our strategy to implement the vision and mission.

- b. Thankfully, the alignment and adjustment of the ministries of our deacons were already underway assisting our youth ministry in being better prepared for Justin's vacancy before summer. We sense God's provision in this timing.
 - c. We will need support from back-ground checked, volunteers, especially this summer, as we serve with our deacons Nick, Kalie, and Amanda to accomplish the summer calendar for our youth ministry.
- 3. We need a search plan. Our next decision will be to determine how we find our next Youth Director. Modernity, the developmental stages of youth, evolution of youth ministry in churches, and cultural shifts provide a unique complexity in discovering who God has called to Saxe Gotha for this next chapter in our youth ministry. Traditional approaches to search teams still exist but the church has also adapted with newer techniques in searching for key program staff.

As you can see, the conversation has already started. Now we need your prayers as we engage with our next search for a new youth director. Perhaps, I can suggest a simple timeline for going forward...

- From now until May 18th – Let's take time to celebrate what God has done through Justin and our youth ministry.
- It looks like June will be our earliest attempt to get feedback from our youth parents and students. What we would like to do is to gather all the youth parents and use this opportunity to hear from those who have been and who will be engaged with our youth ministry by asking and receiving feedback from three questions:
 - What have we done well in youth ministry?
 - What can we do better?
 - When you close your eyes and envision a youth ministry at SGPC, what does it look like?
- Through prayer and diligent discernment, it seems that it might be wise to use this summer to collect information and find answers to the immediate questions we have now and the questions that will arise in the coming weeks.