

It's Not Just for Parents

Meet Jane. Jane is an 8-year-old little girl. Her parents attend church service most Sundays and send Jane to Sunday School after service while her parents get Starbucks drinks. Jane sits in Sunday school for an hour and learns about one of the stories in the Bible. Sometimes she does a craft, but mostly she sits and listens. Often, her mind wanders off and thinks about things, even though she actively tries to focus on the lesson. Sunday School is a lot like her school classroom during the week.

At 12, she sits in confirmation class each Wednesday. On her way to class, she does her confirmation homework. In confirmation, she tends to zone out because she's already spent half the week in school and volleyball practice every day. Her mind just can't focus on another lecture. Towards the end of the year, life becomes very stressful as she memorizes verses and explanations. On confirmation Sunday, her stomach is in knots and her hands are shaking as she recites what she memorized in front of a bunch of strangers. She's congratulated and given a piece of cake, but isn't necessarily sure she understood what she memorized.

When she's 16, Jane attends the required fundraising events that their senior youth put on so she can go to the National Youth Gathering that her parents insist on her attending. While she has one close friend in senior youth, she feels like an outsider. At the gathering, she feels even more out of place with a different style worship service than she's ever seen before. They sing songs she's never heard and raise their hands and everything feels uncomfortable.

Now she's 18, headed off to college. During her freshman year, she meets a variety of people who challenge her faith. She doesn't feel comfortable finding another church in her new city. Some homosexual students challenge her point blank and ask why she "hates them". In biology, Christians are subtly mocked and slighted. There's an old man with a sign in the student courtyard that says, "you deserve hell" and she feels embarrassed, not wanting to be associated with him. She doesn't tell her parents about her faith struggles, because she's trying to be independent and doesn't want them to worry. When she comes home for the holidays, she stops attending church. Eventually, she renounces her faith all together.



The Opportunity

The Church of Summit of Peace faces the challenge to insure another one of our kids does not share Jane's story. That's why it's so important that we write a new story for our children. Here is what the Youth Team hopes to include in the new story of a child growing up at SOP.

The foundation of the children and youth ministries is to teach our kids to Grow, Share and Live their faith. There are several ways we plan to accomplish this. Bible stories will become interactive with real life examples. Adult mentors will lead conversations with small groups of kids to discuss subjects like how Bible stories are relevant to life today, why the catechism is important, and how to answer the tough questions our kids face in an often anti-Christian world. Nurturing relationships with our kids will provide opportunities for them to see how other Christians live out their faith and provide a mentor to call on anytime a kid has struggles in their life or faith.


Helping our kids to understand and make sense of their faith is only part of it. Our kids will also experience how to live out their faith by putting their faith into action. From the time a child begins Sunday school, they will participate in service projects so they begin to understand they can make a difference even as a three-year-old. As they get older, there will be opportunities to act as small group leaders to younger kids, create and run service projects, and plan and lead cross generational events.

Monthly cross generational events with a bible lesson, music and activities will allow the youngest to the oldest of our Church to learn, share, praise, and pray together to build a sense of community and strong relationships across generations. These events will also help to equip families on how to live out their faith at home the rest of the week.

Growing in the faith by learning and applying The Word to life today, sharing that faith with their church family, and living that faith through service to those in need will better prepare our kids to live a life of faith and love of Jesus Christ.

Your Role

There are many opportunities available to serve in the children and youth ministries at Summit of Peace. You can serve on Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights, or another day of the week. You can work with our toddlers, preschoolers,



elementary age, middle school or high school kids. You can plan and teach a lesson, or show up and focus on getting to know a small group of kids. You can work behind the scenes and help prepare the lessons and materials for one of our programs. If you are organized or like to gather supplies, or have general computer skills, we have a role for you! If you are caring, or friendly, or a good teacher, we have a role for you! If you love Jesus, we have a role for you!


If you are still unsure of how you could help, there are two more opportunities. First, PRAY. Pray about how you might help. Pray for our teachers, mentors and volunteers. And most importantly, pray for our kids. Second, we will be kicking off our monthly Cross Generational Sunday School program in December. Join us: it's not just for parents! Share your experience and wisdom, and be filled with joy as you are reminded of the beauty and innocence the perspective of a child offers.

The old proverb that says it takes a village to raise a child, could not be truer. This is the calling of the Year of the Youth Team. It's the calling of all parents. And, it's the calling of ***each and every Christian***, because we are ALL the Church.

Closing

Meet John. John is an 8-year-old little boy. His parents attend church with John, and encourage him to bring his friends. They sit in Bible Study while John attends a fun Sunday “school” program. There’s lots of interaction when learning about Jesus and John’s own faith, including games, crafts, but, most importantly, small group conversations with “small group leaders”. These adults help John apply the lesson to his own life. He spends the week talking about the lesson and his faith with his parents. Once a month, he gets to know other members of the church and feels a sense of belonging by partaking in a “cross generation” bible study. The older members make him feel like he is their equal and they share about their life.

At 12, confirmation is much different than when his older sister went through it. He watches a video at home with his parents, and they work together to answer questions. They discuss the topic as a family, and he writes down a couple of questions he has about the topic. On Wednesday, his questions are answered and he sits with a mentor and two classmates and they discuss the topic further. His mentor asks about his life and even comes to his basketball games on the weekends.



When he's 16, he bonds with his counselors and fellow students. They talk about the “tough” questions openly and honestly. He learns about “worship variety”. His parents volunteer at the youth events and he's encouraged to participate, even if it means missing a basketball practice or two.

Now, he's 18 and feels comfortable with his faith, knowing Jesus is always with him, even as he moves away for school. When he's challenged in college, John calls his mentor from confirmation, or counselor from senior youth, whom he still talks to regularly. They talk openly and honestly about his struggles, and he prays with them over the phone. His parents visit one weekend and “church shop” with him and help him find a church he is comfortable with in his new city. His faith grows stronger as time goes on, and he takes on leadership roles at his new church while attending college.

What role will you play, to help the Jane's and John's of our congregation?

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