

Youth Mentoring Program

FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

1. Why Mentoring?

1. Adolescence is can be a challenging and lonely time and in addition to parental support young teenagers can benefit from support through:
 - A relationship with an adult role model
 - A way of discovering beliefs and values by which they can live their life
 - By belonging to a community.
2. An opportunity to learn and form faith through watching and walking alongside a person of faith.
3. Intentional relationship between a younger and older person also encourages healthy self-esteem and confidence. A safe forum where a young person can talk about issues and problems
4. Creates and nurtures community in a church congregation. Leads to growth in faith of both older and younger people. A way for the whole church to be involved in youth ministry.

2. Who can be a Mentor?

Any member of the community who is preferably over 40 (though this is not a strict rule) and has the following qualities:

- Belief in God and commitment to the local church made visible through their actions.
- Willingness to discuss and explore their faith.
- Genuine compassion for people.
- Able to listen.
- Respect for young people, and a desire to see them grow into responsible adulthood.
- Positive attitude.
- Able to give time to a relationship.
- Flexible and open to new ideas.
- Able to maintain confidentiality.
- Commitment to the program and to being supported and 'mentored' themselves.

3. How does it fit in with the rest of Westgate's approach to youth ministry?

- 10-13 year olds participate in youth activities and Sunday teaching programs.
- 14 year olds (approx) are invited to participate in a mentor partnership
- Pastors arrange for an appropriate pairing of Mentor and Mentoree in consultation with Mentoree and parents/guardians.
- Youth continue to be involved in the activities and Sunday programs.
- After six sessions of mentoring and a demonstrated interest in continuing learning, the mentoree is invited to consider being part of a 'leadership development' small group that further extends and provides opportunities to participate in the life and mission of the church.
- Baptism and initiation into membership of the church may take place at any point during or following the mentoring program.

4. What Resource Material is being used?

The *Making Disciples* material.

This material is designed for a confirmation process within the Methodist church tradition in the USA written by the highly respected (and balanced) Dr. William Willimon. The process of confirmation is very similar to the practice of baptismal preparation in church traditions that practice believer's baptism (Baptists). The meaning of infant baptism + confirmation and believer's baptism is very similar – being the process of initiation into personal faith and community membership.

The material is suited to our purpose in that it is firmly based on a mentoring relationship and experiential/modelling type of learning. It provides a framework for exploration together without constraining the process to achieve certain goals.

Some key elements/ideas it includes are:

- Reading the Gospel of Luke together.
- Experiencing other church traditions together.
- Journalling and sharing your life/faith 'timeline'.
- Praying with and for each other.
- Learning about different aspect of church life by attending and reflecting together on the experience.

An emphasis on “walking together”.

Other material used subsequently: *The Sacred Life of Us, DévoZine, Way to Live – Christian Practices for Teens.*

5. What about Duty of Care issues?

- Westgate is committed to upholding the Youth Ministry Duty of Care policy which among other details stipulates the following:
- All Mentors must be members in good standing and willing to abide by the D of C guidelines and submit to a police check.
- Times and places of meeting must be discussed and approved by the parents of the mentoree and communicated with the Pastors.

6. How does mentoring start?

1. 13-14 year olds are encouraged by Pastor/Youth Leader to consider being mentored or approach a Pastor expressing interest and discussing process.
2. After a positive response, Pastor or Mentoring coordinator arranges visit with parents and mentoree and discusses the process, material and suggests suitable (according to criteria above) and available mentor/s.
3. If agreed, mentor then contacts young person and introduces themselves and arranges a visit to the parents and mentoree to introduce and discuss the most suitable time and place.
4. Place and time of mentoring sessions are reported to Pastor/s.
5. Mentoring begins.

7. When does mentoring finish and what happens after this?

- The initial program is approximately 12 weeks in duration (though this may easily expand to longer due to the flexibility of the material and circumstances of the mentoree).
- After this phase the Mentor/Mentoree may decide to continue to meet on a fortnightly or other regular basis to maintain ongoing relationship and support for as long as it is helpful.
- Mentoree is invited to participate in Leadership Development group and opportunities.
- Young people reaching the 17-20 year old age group are challenged again about Baptism and membership and where appropriate encouraged to apply for a Ministry Scholarship or Internship position (being developed).

Geoff Wraight
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