

Meeting Date: Sunday, June 6<sup>th</sup> 11:00-12:30pm

Meeting Location: Student Ministries Center at NewSong Church

**Purpose of the Meeting:** To better align our weekly programming with our values and strategy for helping teens to know Christ and to become integrated into the Church.

**Purposes of Youth Ministry:**

1. Connect Teens to Christ
2. Integrate Teens into the Church
3. Empower Teens to reach their friends, campuses, and the world for Christ
4. To see our students remain actively pursuing Christ and participating in a local church after High School

**Values of Youth Ministry:**

1. Community, Communion, Commission
2. Providing Relationally Safe Space for Teenagers at NewSong (i.e., giving them a place to belong at NewSong)
3. Intergenerational Worship Experiences
4. Supporting Families
5. Helping Students Individuate (Who am I? Do I &/or my choices matter? Where do I fit in this world?)

**Strategy for Youth Ministry:**

1. Adult Christ-followers engaging teenagers in **relationship** and showing them how to follow Christ
2. Creating Time & Space for Students to Connect with God through:
  - a. Age-Specific Teaching
  - b. Intergenerational Worship
  - c. Large Youth Celebration Services
3. Small Group Involvement &/or Mentoring Relationships

**Current Weekly Programming:**

- Group Breakdown:
  - MSM – 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
  - HSM – 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
- Weekly Programming:
  - Sunday Morning 9am: MSM
  - Sunday Night 6:30-8pm: HSM
  - Wednesday Night 6:30-8pm: MSM
  - Other Weekly Gatherings: Age/Gender Specific D-Groups

**Proposed Weekly Programming:**

- Group Breakdown:
  - MSM – 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
  - HSM – 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
- Weekly Programming:
  - Sunday Morning 11am: MSM & HSM
  - Sunday Night 6:30-8pm: HSM
  - Wednesday Night 6:30-8pm: MSM
  - Other Weekly Gatherings: Age/Gender Specific D-Groups

## Overview of Proposed Changes & Basic Rationale:

1. *Move 9<sup>th</sup> Grade from Middle School Ministry into the High School Ministry. (Result: MSM = 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade; HSM = 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade)*
  - a. We previously chose to stagger students' ministry transition with their school transition, by having them switch from MSM to HSM between their 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade years rather than between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, believing that it would help more students make the transition between the ministries. While that decision seemed to be effective for the first class of students, it has not been for subsequent classes.
  - b. Visiting freshmen have chosen not to return to our group because they feel out of place with junior high students.
2. *Shift Sunday Youth Service from 9am to 11am service.*
  - a. The Route 56 program, which is growing and is in need of a larger room, would be able to use the Student Ministries Center during the 9am service.
  - b. The Student Ministries Team periodically offers events designed around NewSong's 3 C's (e.g., solitude retreats, service projects, afternoon trips into LA, etc.) on Sunday afternoons, and an 11am Youth Service could be utilized to prepare students for the event.
  - c. There is a significant disparity in the number of people attending NewSong's morning services. In other words, there are significantly more people attending first service than there are attending second service. We might be able to balance the number of people attending each service by switching our programming for students to second service.
  - d. This provides an opportunity for more sleep/rest on Sunday mornings for students and student ministries leaders.
3. *Include 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Sunday morning Youth Service that is currently only Middle School Ministry.*
  - a. We have not provided programming for high school students on Sunday mornings as a means of encouraging them to integrate into NewSong's main worship gatherings at 9am and 11am. However, I am questioning the effectiveness of not offering programming for high school students on Sunday mornings as a strategy for helping them integrate into the overall NewSong community.
  - b. We do not currently have an integration/contact point for visiting high school students on Sunday mornings.
4. *Include students in the first worship set of the main service on Sunday mornings, and then exit to our Youth Service for age-specific teaching.*
  - a. Students are exposed to intergenerational worship on a weekly basis and also have the opportunity to receive age-specific teaching.

## Extended Rationale of Proposed Changes:

1. Move 9<sup>th</sup> Grade into the High School Ministry. (Result: MSM = 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade; HSM = 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade)
  - a. *History:*
    - i. Five years ago we decided to shift the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from the high school ministry into the junior high ministry. We were noticing that we were graduating moderate size classes of students out of the middle school ministry (8-14 students), but only a small portion of the class (2-4 students) was actually integrating into the high school ministry. At that time, we concluded that the reason we were seeing so many students exit our ministry was because we were asking them to transition from their relationally safe junior high ministry into a relationally unsafe high school ministry<sup>1</sup> *at the same time as* they were being forced to transition from junior high school into high school. We speculated that since the transition from junior high school to high school was difficult on the students, and that they did not have the emotional strength to also deal with a transition from junior high ministry to high school ministry. Therefore, we decided to shift their transition from junior high ministry to high school ministry from 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> grade. We hoped that if we kept them in the junior high ministry for an extra year, that they would be able to make their school transition while remaining connected with the junior high ministry, and that they would be ready to transition into the high school ministry by their sophomore year.
  - b. *Rationale for the Shift:*
    - i. After living with our conclusions and decisions for the past five years, I would change our conclusions and consequently our decisions. I now believe that a student's ability to transition from the junior high ministry to the high school ministry is more directly tied to their *relationship* with the ministry leaders than to their emotional strength in dealing with transition. I now believe that the reason our junior high graduates were not making the transition to our high school ministry was primarily because: (1) we were on our fourth high school pastor in six years, and (2) the junior high and high school ministries were not coordinating with each other to connect high school ministry leaders with incoming students prior to their transition.
    - ii. We have also had a few freshmen visit our middle school ministry and choose not to return. After dialoguing with their parents, we have been informed that the freshmen have felt uncomfortable being in a group with junior high students.
  - c. *Costs to Consider:*
    - i. Any time programming is changed there is potential for frustration and subsequent fallout, which is why it is important that (1) we make an informed

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<sup>1</sup> The reason that the junior high ministry was relationally safe to the students is based on the fact that they had spend 1-3 years building relationships with the other students and the junior high leaders. The high school ministry was relationally unsafe because the students only had relationship with the other students in their class and they had not yet had the opportunity to build relationships with the high school ministry leaders.

decision and (2) interested parties have an opportunity to give their input and process any decisions.

2. Shift Sunday Youth Service from 9am to 11am service.

a. History:

- i. The junior high group has historically met during first service. This has been the case since before I began leading the junior high ministry in February 2004, so I do not know the rationale for this choice.

b. Rationale for the Shift:

- i. The Route 56 program is growing and is in need of a larger room. The only two rooms that could host a growing Route 56 program is the Elements Room, which is used during both services and therefore not an option, and the Student Ministry Center (SMC), which is available during the service that the Student Ministries is not using it. By shifting the Sunday Youth Service to 11am, the SMC would then be available for Route 56 at 9am.
- ii. The Student Ministries Team is planning on increasing the number of events outside of our weekly programming that would be ideally scheduled for Sunday afternoons, and by shifting the Sunday morning Youth Service to 11am, that service could be utilized to prepare students for the event. Please note that we do not intend to host events simply for the sake of hosting events. These events will be intentionally designed to draw students closer to Christ through relationship with Student Ministries Leaders, while reinforcing NewSong's core values of Community, Communion, and Commission. Also, we have not hosted many events outside of our weekly programming for the past three years because we have been focused on stabilizing our primary discipling structures (weekly programming & D-Groups), so this "increase" is relative to the fact that we have not hosted many events; we will likely host one event every six to eight weeks. That being said, *a primary timeslot to hold these events is Sunday afternoons* for the following reasons: (1) it saves leaders and families time and travel costs by hosting the event when people have already made the commute to NewSong for Sunday morning services, rather than asking them to set aside and travel on another day of the week, and (2) if the Sunday morning Youth Service is shifted to 11am, it can be utilized to prepare students for the event. For example, if the Student Ministries were to conduct a solitude retreat on a Sunday afternoon for our students, the Sunday morning Youth Service could be utilized to teach students about the value and means of connecting with God through the spiritual discipline of solitude.
- iii. There is a significant disparity in the number of people attending NewSong's morning services. In other words, there are significantly more people attending first service than there are attending second service. We might be able to balance the number of people attending each service by switching our programming for students to second service.
- iv. I believe that a shift from meeting during first service to second service is best for students and student ministry leaders, as it provides an opportunity for more sleep/rest on Sunday mornings.

c. Costs to Consider:

- i. This shift would be inconvenient for families with younger children who need to keep a routine of getting up early and who are in the pattern of attending the

- 9am service, and for families who have students in Route 56, who would still meet at 9am.
- ii. Some of our students are involved in club sports teams and/or local drama programs that occasionally have Sunday afternoon events that may conflict with a Youth Service from 11:00am-12:30pm.
3. Include 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade students in Sunday morning Youth service that is currently only Middle School Ministry.
    - a. History: Historically we have not offered a Sunday morning service that has included high school students, because we have wanted our high school students to begin participating in the main service before graduation as a means of preparing them to attend the main service during college.
    - b. Rationale for the Shift:
      - i. We still value integrating students into the main service and preparing them to attend a local church throughout college. However, we have also noticed that many of our sophomores and juniors try to remain in attendance in the Middle School Sunday service because they do not enjoy or feel comfortable in the main service, which has prompted me to question the effectiveness of not offering programming for high school students on Sunday mornings as a strategy for helping them integrate into the overall NewSong community.
      - ii. Also, Sunday mornings tend to be the primary time in which families visit NewSong, and we do not currently have an integration point for high school students. High school students visiting with their families on a Sunday morning will attend main service with their families and likely never meet any of our high school ministry leaders, who are in place to help students learn to follow Christ while they individuate apart from their parents.
    - c. Costs to Consider:
      - i. We will be offering programming for high school students that competes with their involvement in main service.
  4. Include students in the first worship set of the main service on Sunday mornings, and then exit to our Youth Service for age-specific teaching.
    - a. History:
      - i. The Sunday morning programming for middle school has always simply met separate from the main service entirely, except when there are special events that specifically pertain to them, since before I began leading the ministry, so I do not know the rationale for this decision.
    - b. Rationale:
      - i. By meeting in the Worship Center for the first worship set and then exiting for the teaching portion, students are exposed to intergenerational worship on a weekly basis, have the opportunity to develop a feeling of relational safety with the adult community, have the opportunity to receive age-specific teaching, and also have the opportunity to begin building relationships with our adult student ministries leaders, which can be deepened at night programming, in small groups, and outside of student ministries programming.
    - c. Costs to Consider:
      - i. We would take up a number of seats in the main service for the first worship set.
      - ii. Some people may perceive our exit to our group time as a distraction.

**Fuller Youth Institute: College Transition Project**  
***What Children & Teens Need Prior to High School Graduation***

Because of the growing national concern over what happens to students as they move away from youth ministries, FYI has launched the College Transition Project to study over 400 youth group graduates during their first three years in college. We are hoping to better understand the characteristics of youth groups that are associated with a healthy transition to college life and help youth workers develop those qualities in their youth groups, with the ultimate goal of developing a faith that lasts a lifetime. Some of our most interesting findings to date include:

**Parental Faith Dialogues:** The most important factor here seems to be parents discussing their OWN faith with kids, not just asking kids about their faith. Of course, parents talking about their own faith opens the door for kids to feel more comfortable to share their faith and questions. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

**Intergenerational Worship:** Participating in worship with the larger church during high school is correlated with deeper faith across their transition to college.

**Student Leadership:** More than any other aspect of youth ministry involvement, being involved in leadership in some way and being involved in ministry to younger kids are two areas that stand out as being connected with lasting faith so far.

**Mentorship:** Cheryl Crawford’s interview-based portion of the research pointed to the power of mentors and parents who were really connected with kids and stayed connected through the transition to college. Students need adults they knew they could depend on, tell the truth to without receiving condemnation, be challenged by, and who would listen to their concerns.

**Safe Space to Doubt:** Students who feel safe to express their doubts and questions in their churches in high school actually show stronger faith across the college transition.

**Integrated Faith v. Christian “Dos & Don’ts”:** One of the most damaging things to faith across the college transition is the way that kids have embraced a gospel that is more akin to Dallas Willard’s “gospel of sin management” than the full/real gospel. In other words, at-risk behavior avoidance seems to be something that is taught/caught as a “Christians do this and don’t do that” motivation, rather than something along the lines of whole-life integration of faith and behavior (e.g., “I love and serve Jesus, and after thinking this through, I can see that participating in \_\_\_\_\_ puts me out of alignment with God’s dreams for me”).

**Senior Issues:** Key issues to train high school seniors in before graduation include recovery from poor choices, finding a church, handling time and money (these are two big areas where students don’t make the connection between faith and the rest of life), building friendships, and the importance of the first two weeks of freshman year for making key choices that set the trajectory for the rest of the year.

## Appendix B - Other Local Programming:

*Note: These local youth ministries were selected simply based upon my, Chris Neal's, relationship with their respective leaders and my knowledge of their programming.*

### Baseline Community Church

- Group Breakdown:
  - MSM – 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
  - HSM – 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
- Weekly Programming:
  - Sundays
    - Junior High Sunday School: 10:30am
    - High School Youth Group: 6:30-8:30pm
  - Wednesdays
    - Junior High Youth Group: 6:30-8pm

### Grace Church of La Verne

- Group Breakdown:
  - MSM – 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
  - HSM – 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
- Weekly Programming:
  - MSM & HSM: Sunday Night 6pm
  - MSM & HSM Small Groups throughout the Week

### Christ Church of the Valley

- Group Breakdown:
  - MSM – 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
  - HSM – 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
- Weekly Programming:
  - Midweek:
    - Junior High - High School Wednesday Nights, 6:30-9pm @ CCV
  - Sunday:
    - Nothing Formal; Either Hangout or Help with Projects

### New Life Community:

- Group Breakdown:
  - MSM – 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>
  - HSM – 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>
- Weekly Programming:
  - MSM – Wednesday 7:00-8:30pm
  - HSM – Thursday 7:00-8:30pm

### Pomona First Baptist

- Group Breakdown:
  - MSM – 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>
  - HSM – 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>
  - Next Gen – 9<sup>th</sup>-Young Adult
- Weekly Programming:
  - MSM:
    - Sunday Morning:
      - Small group - 8:30-9:35 am
      - Junior High Worship Service - 9:45-11:00 am
      - In the sanctuary. 11:11 am - The jr. high sits on the left side.
    - Midweek:
      - Skate Park - 4:30-5:30 pm
      - Junk Food Alley - 5:55-7:00 pm
      - Worship Service - 7:00-8:30 pm
  - HSM:
    - Sunday Morning:
      - Sundays: 9:45 - 11:00am
    - Midweek:
      - Next Gen (High School through Young Adult)
      - Wednesdays: 7:00 - 8:45pm