



A Message from the Youth Overview Task Force

The Youth Overview Task Force was formed by Session in December to take a comprehensive look at the full range of youth ministries (grades 6-12) in our church. With one exception, all of us are parents of current or former participants in the various ministries with and for youth at First Presbyterian, and several of us have served as leaders, teachers, or mentors in those ministries. Our group is one of three task forces appointed this year to work on important areas of church life. The other two are considering campus ministry and church facilities respectively.

As our name suggests, we have been charged with providing an “overview” of youth ministries. Although we are obviously interested in what is working well or not in various facets of ministries to youth at First Pres, we are not tasked with conducting a program review in the narrow sense of the word; nor are we responsible for personnel evaluation. Rather, we seek to take a longer view of youth ministries in our church. We seek to articulate a vision for continuing a strong and vibrant ministry with our youth. We know that the middle and high school years are a critical time for faith development, and we understand that youth ministries are part of a continuum leading from baptism to adult life in the church. As the formal charge to our group states, “youth need a place to learn and explore what the church teaches, how faith is practiced, and how a reliance on God can provide a solid foundation for life.” By the same token, they also need “a place to question and to discuss their ideas, doubts, and growing convictions, to engage in mission,” and to grapple with the issues they face in their daily lives and in the wider world. And parents need the support of the church as they seek to be good parents for their teens.

Bearing in mind the importance of youth ministries to the vitality and future of our church, we have been studying the literature on youth ministries and considering data about today’s young people. We are seeking to identify best practices from throughout our denomination. In the past few months, we have met with members of the youth ministries work group and with a cross-section of leaders, teachers, and staff engaged in ministry with youth. We are listening to a wide range of perspectives.

We now call on you for help and counsel. We have prepared two surveys, one designed for youth leaders and teachers and the other intended for parents and past and current students. In the coming week we will share the latter survey with all members of the congregation. We invite you to participate and encourage you give us your insights and comments. The survey will be available online—watch for the link in the next “Our Life Together” message. Paper copies will also be available in the Church Office. We plan an open session for interested members of the congregation in the near future as well. Watch for members of our task force at Coffee Hour.

Please feel free to contact any of us with questions and ideas. We ask for your prayers and support as we seek to identify and envision the very best in youth ministries for our church.

Faithfully yours, the Youth Overview Task Force

Rob Bauman , audettebauman@hotmail.com

Bob Crawford, bob.crawford2@gmail.com

Chris Dahl (chair), cdahl@geneseo.edu

Gail Einhaus, gail.einhaus@gmail.com

Betsy McCallister, bmccallist@aol.com

Renee Mulcrone, rsherman@umich.edu

Rob VanRenterghem, robvanrenterghem@gmail.com