

Youth Ministry Dream Team, April 2019 to April 2020

1. Work of the team

Over the last year, the following work has been done:

- formation of the team from MCEC constituent pastors, camps, schools, churches and youth to meet monthly.
- the primary task has been consideration of youth ministry in MCEC.
- review of the visioning work already accomplished and resulting in the vision statement, *“Investing in intentional, unconditional relationships with youth; walking with them towards a fearless faith in Christ Jesus.”*
- review of *MCEC Children & Youth Census 2016 collected and compiled by Jessica Reesor Rempel.*
- creation and distribution of an online survey to MCEC pastors, youth workers, parents, sponsors, Sunday School teachers, volunteers who interact with youth and junior youth and youth and junior youth.
- listened to pastors, youth workers and sponsors at events such as Make a Difference Day (for junior youth) and Fall Youth Retreat.
- formation of regional teams of young adults to listen to congregational youth and youth leaders share about their personal and group experience and their relationship to MCEC.

2. Some early findings

The following findings arose out of the work described above:

- 72 of 101 MCEC congregations in the 2016 census, had:
 - 632 children 0-5 yrs.; 1,056 children 6-13 yrs.; 505 youth 14-17 yrs.; 485 young adults 18-21 yrs. A total of 2,678.
- of 72 congregations responding to the 2016 census:
 - 4% had no children to young adults
 - 54% had 1-30 children to young adults
 - 26% had 31-70 children to young adults
 - 15% had 81-160 children to young adults
- the issues that emerged include: large issues of justice and peace (i.e., climate change, poverty, sexuality and LGBTQ inclusion); connecting and building social networks with others; enjoyment of intergenerational relationships; ambivalent faith identities and interests; limited to no awareness of MCEC and MCEC activities for youth.

3. Some early thoughts and concerns

- with a membership of 13,206 in 2016, having at least 2,678 children to young adults associated with MCEC congregations ought to give us pause to consider how they are part of MCEC.
- we celebrate the inclusion of these people as part of MCEC. This is good news.
- with the majority (54%) of congregations in 2016 having smaller sized youth groups, we wonder how to best support them in a way that shares resources equitably across MCEC.
- most of MCEC's support of this cohort of children to young adults has been done through ad hoc activities, often planned by camp and school staff with MCEC contracted personnel.
- most of this cohort's relationship with MCEC has been through schools and camps which has nurtured good loyalty to the schools and camps for those who have participated in them.
- awareness and understanding of MCEC is limited to non-existent for most of this cohort. Is MCEC as a whole interested in and have a reason to nurture a relationship with this cohort?

- raising leaders for MCEC from this cohort will be more difficult than previous generations who had memory of and engagement with MCEC structures and programs.
- faith formation and sense of peoplehood seems to be mostly a commitment to a set of values such as peace-making, community living. Where these values come from and why MCEC might hold to them do not seem to be clear to this cohort.

4. A proposal

The Youth Ministry Dream Team proposes the development and hiring of a position in Youth and Young Adult Ministry with the goal of:

- further facilitation of vision for youth and young adult ministry in MCEC and its congregations.
- creative support of each congregation in its ministry with youth.
- sensitive and effective support of faith nurture among MCEC youth, young adults and their congregations.
- growth and support of a network of relationships between youth and young adults of MCEC
- plan and implement activities for nurture and resourcing of youth and their congregations, i.e., retreats, leadership development, etc.
- creating and/or collecting resources that youth ministries can use.
- maintenance of an appropriate and useful social media presence.
- rebuild a Youth Ministry Council for the purpose of:
 - further development of the vision of MCEC's junior youth, youth and young adult ministry.
 - giving direction to, planning and implementing the various activities of MCEC ministry in this area.
 - developing leadership gifts and experiences among a diverse and representative group of youth and young adults from MCEC congregations. Drawing from every cluster of MCEC congregations, with a majority of youth (perhaps 9), several adults active in youth ministry (perhaps 4), and the person hired in this position (perhaps named as MCEC Youth Minister).
- We recommend that this be a 1.0 FTE ministerial position.