

CM 101 – Baptist Children & Family

Help! I'm New to Children's Ministry!



Starting a new job can feel overwhelming especially when that job involves children (and churches!). So, where do you start? If you are new to Children's Ministry (CM) here is our list of 'where to start' – or CM 101! In pages that follow we have included some great ideas and some 'thought provokers' designed to help you start with excellence in mind.

1. Make sure that you choose curriculum that fits your church and your kids. Talk to other CMers as this is the best way to find out what works and what doesn't. Something that may seem too hard to use online or in a book can be much easier when you ask others who have used it. (See the **Curriculum** section of this website for more detailed information.)
2. Get a team around you who can walk the ministry road with you – they don't have to be experienced but passion and a love for Jesus is key! Keep in mind that skills can be taught but passion is caught. (See the **Volunteers** section for more ideas)
3. Police-check everyone who works with kids in your church – including you! This says to our families that keeping their kids safe is important to us. (You will find this information in the **Safety First** section)
4. Make a plan – for the term but preferably for the year. That way everyone knows where you are going and what's required – and everyone feels more secure. Planning makes your life EASIER. Trust us, we know - we've been there. It doesn't have to be complicated so don't be scared off and it doesn't mean you can't make changes – it simply means you know when you need to.
5. Join a cluster group – or if you don't have one in your area find someone else in ministry that you can talk to and share ideas and resources with. They don't have to be from a Baptist church, they just have to be someone who you can talk ministry and kids with. The Regional Coaches can help you locate a group near you.
6. Gather information about your kids and families – there is a sample information sheet in the Safety First manual. Have a registration process either in your church foyer or in your ministry time. Put a system in place so that you know who is there each week and how you can make contact if needed.
7. From here on you can look at everything else in this booklet or ideas you have learned from others and just GO FOR IT! It will depend on how much time and resource you have. Don't forget that keeping kids safe and helping them to know Jesus is what we are here for.

8. **Last but not least, remember to look after yourself.** Your ministry will only flourish if you are keeping yourself healthy, happy and spiritually nurtured. Don't forget to look out for the needs of your own family. And remember to have FUN!

And on a last note, my personal mission is to remove the name SUNDAY SCHOOL from our NZ vernacular. Let's promote **Children's Ministry** and leave school to the weekday educators!

Developing a Vision and Mission

"Where there is no vision the people perish" – Proverbs 29:18

Where is your children's ministry going? Before you steer a boat, you may want to know what direction to go in. A thriving children's ministry will have a destination - the vision statement. Vision is a vital part of leading children's ministry leaders and volunteers. Vision will bring purpose and unity to volunteers. Vision will define your ministry and help you steer your ship affectively. Your children's ministry vision and mission should line up with the vision of your church, but be unique to your department. If your church focus is community, you may want to include that as part of your vision and mission statement. If you are partnering with families make sure this is integral. To help you get started here are a few vision/mission statements from other churches. These were written specifically for a particular church, but can help you get started in the right direction:

Vision - Transforming communities one child at a time (Romans 12)

Mission - In strong partnership with parents, grandparents and caregivers to lead our children into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. To enable and empower our children to play an active role in God's story of redemption and restoration

Vision - to win kids to Christ and grow them spiritually!

Mission - Our children's ministry exists to SHARE Christ with the kids in our community, TEAM them with other Christians and ADVANCE them in their spiritual maturity, helping them to RECOGNIZE their spiritual gifts and SURRENDER their lives to God.

Vision - Go, prepare, send: to know, love and follow Jesus

Mission - to make sure the children of the church are encouraged to be, and recognized as, a functioning part of the Christian family, that they get the best possible teaching, and are surrounded by God's love. In summary: Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Another great idea to help you get started is brainstorming words that remind you of your children's ministry such as fun, diverse, extraordinary, revolutionary, wild, revival, global, missions, go, big, power... People you may want to include in your vision are kids, volunteers, parents, the community.

Once you know where you are going, what words describe your ministry best and know how you want to write your vision, than get started. Don't hold back, be bold in the vision you see for your ministry. Write the vision so that everyone, big and small, can understand and run with it (Mal 2:10)!

But remember to keep it simple. If people can't remember it, they can't follow it. Keep it as short as you possibly can as long as it motivates and directs people.

How you accomplish your vision will evolve. But answer this question before you write your vision - What do you passionately want to accomplish in the lives of the children and families in your church / community? That is your vision.

Karen Warner

How Welcoming is Your Church for Children & Families? Will They Come Again?

We have one opportunity to make a good impression on new children and their families and often it only takes about 8 minutes for them to decide whether they will come back again.

What are some of the things that people need to know and experience so that they feel welcome, secure and confident that their children will be safe?

Where do I go?

First time visitors have no idea where stuff is. Good signage and a welcome desk where they can get information are a great way to help them. Ushers need to be available to show people around and take them to other parts of the building.

What is on for children?

Clear signage and information in the newsletter about Children's Programmes is vital, including where they meet, what they do and the timing of when the children go out during the service or whether they go straight to their activities.

The embarrassment factor:

We need to think through what we do at church that might embarrass new people, like asking them to come up front for a chocolate or expecting them to find their way around on their own. Our communication should take into consideration that new people are present.

Will my child be safe?

The church is one of the few places where parents leave their children with total strangers. This is an anxious experience for many. A central information booth, staffed by informed volunteers is a good way to tell parents where their children go, what they will be taught and how and where they pick them up again. A general information brochure will keep parents informed and inspire confidence that you are organized, and have safety procedures in place for activities with children.

Will we make friends here?

This is an important question for anyone new, child or adult. Are people at this church interested in me as a person? How we engage people in conversation, invite them for a coffee after church or even lunch, and then follow up after the visit makes a big difference to them coming again.

Re-sensitise yourself! Visit another church where no-one knows who you are and refresh your memory as to how it feels to be new and be unsure about how things are done. Use this experience to evaluate your church and what you hear as you follow up on visitors to your church.

If we start paying this some attention, we might find that people WILL come again because they have been made to feel welcome, have been informed about how we do things and have been engaged in conversations that lead to friendships.

Elke Keeling

What a Child Sees in Your Church

As you read this, think of your own church and Children's Ministry and what a child sees, hears and feels when they visit it.

Sam is a 10-year old boy who was invited to church by his friend, Mike. He shares his thoughts and impressions:

I walk through the church door into a room filled with people. Most of them are old but when I look around I see a few other kids moving around in the lower zone that shortys like me inhabit. I notice an exhibit on the right just inside the door with photos and info about the children in the church. It's good to see there is a display place that kids can call their own and I pause to check out the pictures. It looks like this church values children like me. The board is a bit high however. It sits above a bed and close to a doorway where people come and go. Being small I might get bumped if I stand here looking at it for too long. I notice other children hanging around the foyer and wandering into the auditorium with their mums and dads. Some hang onto their parents, others chatter to kids like me. They seem happy to be here. I notice a table with biscuits and drink on it. Other children are helping themselves. "Cool", I say to myself, "They feed you here!" I help myself to a couple or three cookies.

My friend Mike and I wander upstairs to take a look at the rooms the children meet in. There are two carpeted rooms. One has a bunch of random soft couches and chairs in it and a pool table and TV/DVD set. The other has some teaching aids scattered around. The first room looks a bit cluttered to me - bit like my sister's bedroom at home. I wonder if there are any mouldy sandwiches under the couches. Both rooms feel cold and I'm hoping someone will turn a heater on to warm things up. The first room looks like it could hold about 25 kids before starting to max out, while the other room looks good for about 15. The toilets are downstairs, reasonably close for anyone who has a poor sense of timing or a weak bladder like me.

The music is playing below so I hop downstairs and slip into the back of the auditorium. Bright abstract quilted banners on the front wall catch my eye. "Lord of all Creation" one says. The fluorescent colours and shapes stir my imagination. The knotted woodwork also intrigues me. If I get bored I can always count the knots. A man with a guitar steps up to talk. He has a smile on his face and speaks with warmth and good humour. People laugh at his jokes and join in singing and sometimes clapping to a song. I notice other kids singing and some parents holding their little children. It looks like kids feel at home in this place. A little boy starts crying and a lady takes him out. No-one gives her dirty looks. Another little boy wriggles around on the carpet near the back door and talks to himself. He's not making too much noise and nobody seems too bothered or distracted. It feels like a safe place for little people.

Some young people get up to do this skit kind of thing with a rope. It looks interesting and they do some funny things. One of them talked about trusting Jesus and pretended to walk along a tightrope. I liked it when the man piggybacked a teenager across the platform. A man got up and talked about stuff that was happening at the church. They showed some pictures on a big screen up the front while he was talking. I liked looking at the words and pictures. He then asked people who had birthdays during the week to come up and get some prizes. It would be cool letting all those

people know when it is my birthday. An old man got up and prayed a long prayer. Everyone else had their eyes closed but I kept peeking at him and other people. The young people in their blue T shirts and skirts got up and talked about visiting Fiji and seeing some really poor people. They also talked about visiting a prison. They showed some pictures of the people on the screen. Some of the houses the people were in were dirty and shabby. I felt really sad for the children in the pictures. We all got up to sing a song after that and then us kids went out to another programme.

I went back up the narrow stairs to the room with all the couches and stuff. About 13 other kids were there and three adults. A lady called Fiona welcomed us, she had kind eyes and sounded nice and friendly. She prayed a prayer. I wonder if God will answer my prayers. My friend introduced me to the class, but I'm glad I didn't have to say too much because I feel shy in front of other kids. Fiona asked the kids about homework and talked about some awards called 'bible bucks' that you could get for doing stuff the teachers wanted you to do. She talked about a man called Eric Liddell or maybe it was Waddell. She told us he was a runner who was a Christian. I thought she must have been confused because I'm sure he is a NZ rower. I'll have to google his name when I get home. The teacher handed out some sheets of paper with sentences she had copied from the Bible on them. One of the children read them out and then the teacher asked some more questions. They were all about running and athletics and going hard out to follow Jesus. I've been watching the Olympics on TV. We did a lot of sitting and listening and I began to hope we would get to do some other stuff.

The class divided up with the older kids staying with a lady called Eileen and the others going to the room next door with the kind eyed Fiona and her husband Bruce. Bruce was softly spoken and kind and doing a lot of stuff to help Fiona. I could see they loved each other by the little looks and words they exchanged. I went through with them and we did this card game about Noah. I felt proud 'cause I matched most of my right cards with the bits she read from the Bible. We made some little boats and got to go outside and race them down a gutter. My boat was a bit slow and I had to poke it to make it go faster. I hope all this rain we've been getting isn't God's punishment for bad stuff people are doing. I don't want to drown in a flood. Maybe I need to trust God like Noah and my friend Mike.

My friend Mike stayed in the other room with Eileen. He said she talked about random stuff including Adam and Eve, something called testimonies, some kids in India and a thing called Operation Christmas Child. They watched a video for a bit and then started making some boxes to send gifts to poor kids in other countries. The girls always make better boxes than the boys. He said Eileen was real excited about God and you could feel she really believed what she was talking about. He also said he enjoyed the time but he got a bit bored sitting and listening.

Mike's little kid brother James went to the crèche with a couple called Ruth and Brian. They listen to little kiddies music, had a story about Noah, coloured a picture of a boat and made some sheep with cotton wool and glue. James still had bits of cotton wool stuck to his fingers when he came out. He didn't have a full nappy though. I wonder what Brian and Ruth would have done if he had one of those! Mike said his kid brother James likes Brian and Ruth because they talk nicely to the kids, give them safe cuddles and touches when they need it and play fun games. He said he feels safe and warm there. The room is a bit small though and I wonder if the picket gate is safe for little wee adventurous tykes like James.

After church I chatted a bit with Fiona again. She asked me about school and whether I had liked the lesson. I know she wasn't pretending to be interested like some adults I've met. Eileen was talking with some of the other kids too and asking them how they were. I wandered around the foyer part of the church afterwards and joked around with my friend Mike. Most of the other adults were

talking to each other and not getting down to our air zone to chat with us. I'd like to talk with some of them too. That old man who prayed in church looks interesting to me. The adults didn't seem to mind us being kids and having a bit of fun.

I enjoyed coming to this church. The teachers were nice, the other kids were pretty friendly and we did some interesting things. I think the teachers love kids, you can tell by the way they treat you. I like excitement but I like being loved more. I hope they do some more active stuff next week though and give us some challenges. Mike and I like challenges. Maybe we will get to go to Fiji like those other teenagers. That would be Way Cool!

Makes you think, doesn't it?

Sean Pawson

Planning

The year is coming to an end already and time is needed to plan for 20???. Usually I am too busy and life leading up to December is much too hectic to even think straight, never mind to plan for next year! But then I remember what it feels like to begin a new year with no plans in place, having to figure it all out at the last minute as I go along! Last minute planning? There is no such thing. Last minute and planning are mutually exclusive, aren't they? Or are they?

What if planning gave you the freedom to adopt last minute ideas? What if last minute ideas helped you to tweak plans to make them even more effective? What if planning needs last minute ideas as much as last minute ideas need planning?

I understand that it takes a huge amount of effort to carve out some time to dream and plan for your ministry. Let me suggest to you that if you do make this a priority now, it will save you MUCH TIME and ANGST next year.

To enable you to put your dreams into action requires three things: Ideas, Plans and Actions.



IDEAS are the I wonder? and the What if? Questions. This is where we dream about what the children could experience with God, what do families need? How can we create spiritual environments? How do children meet Jesus?

RED FOR IDEAS = Stop and Think and Dream! Brainstorm and discuss all our ideas!

PLANS are the steps and resources required to achieve your dreams. This is where we deal with the stuff that needs to be in place and answer questions like: What community events can we leverage? What curriculum will we use or write? What can the church community contribute to children's lives today? What do parents need?

AMBER FOR PLANS = Pause as you consider your options and opportunities and match them with your ideas, resources and time available

ACTIONS are what your team does to make the dreams and plans happen. This is where you prepare your team for action by good communication, clear expectations and excellent resources that empower them to minister to children and families.

GREEN FOR ACTION = Go! Here is what you need to do. Go and do it!

All three are required to empower your ministry. You can't do one without the others.

If you only have ideas and plans, no action happens

If you only have plans and actions, soon everything becomes stale and routine

If you only have ideas and action, it can be fun for a while but ultimately leads nowhere.

So..... carve out some time to dream DREAMS.

Make sure you craft some awesome PLANS using the ideas, opportunities and resources God is giving you.

Create an awesome team that ACTIONS the plans enthusiastically because they have been part of the dreaming and planning and are enthusiastic about what God is doing in your community context.

Planning is only an enabler to put dreams into action.

But without planning dreams stay dreams and action becomes random

Last minute needs to be empowered by good planning. Without planning last minute excludes ideas from others, excludes people from getting involved, is a way of keeping all control with the last minute person, fails to bring fresh ideas from others and fails to implement by empowering others.

So do the work of PLANNING – with DREAMING on one side and ACTION on the other. You will find that it empowers you, empowers your volunteers and becomes a blessing to the children and families in your church and community.

Don't leave it to the last minute!

Elke Keeling

What else do I need?

For further information on leading in CM take a look at the other links and documents on this website. And don't forget the importance of safety. Our Safety First manual is available alongside training. Please contact the office for details of training in your area.