

Dear Seeds Community,

Over the last number of years, we have made a conscious effort to clarify and focus our life and work as a church charged to "make Jesus real". Most recently we articulated this focus with three anchors that give direction to our work and activity;

1. foster **relationships**,
2. take time to **listen** and
3. **move** with purpose

Over the last number of months your leadership team (Vision Team and Lead Team) has been wrestling with applying these anchors to what we have been observing about our Seeds community and some of the ministry programs we lead, specifically Mustard Seeds (pre-school), Camp Roots (K-Grade 5), and Youth Ministry (Twigs – Gr.6-8, and Sr Youth – Gr.9-12). We have observed the following:

Camp Roots

- Despite a full complement of leaders and a potential of 20+ children, this program has seen an unsustainably low participation (average 2-3 children per week).
- Our Children's Ministry director (Jackie Harms) stepped down at the end of the year.
- We gathered a cross section of parents of Camp Roots age and of parents with children nearing that age. Here is some of what we learned:
 - i. Parents care about the spiritual formation of their children, but recognize that the pace of life (activities, work, school) make it difficult to participate in regular Sunday children's ministry programs.
 - ii. There is a recognition that our models of child spiritual formation may have run their course, combined with a hopefulness that new models can be developed.
 - iii. Although there is hope for new ways of facilitating spiritual formation, people are not able at this time to provide leadership towards a new way.

Mustard Seeds

- Similar dynamic as Roots...very unpredictable and inconsistent, creating challenge for those leading.

Youth Ministry

- We are struggling to provide a sustainable way of offering either our Sunday morning TWIGS class (low number of potential participants) or our Monthly Youth Ministry (a lack of critical mass).
- Some of our youth participate in other youth groups depending on where they are connected to friends.
- Our Youth Ministry Director (Kendall Funk Wieler) has stepped down.

In the process of discerning a direction we have taken our anchors seriously, taking time to **listen** to God, and to various individuals and groups within the Seeds community. We have fostered **relationships** with each other in this process and have made connections to others in our surrounding community in hopes of finding a way forward. And in all of this, we have been discerning how we can **move** with purpose. Sometimes what we decide to stop doing is as significant as what we decide to start doing.

In light of all of this, as a Seeds leadership we have decided to...

1. Stop offering a Camp Roots, Mustard Seeds ministry programs to make space for what may emerge as we let go of something that isn't reaching our vision.
2. Stop running any Youth Ministry programs (Sunday Morning or otherwise) for Grades 6-8 and Grades 9-12.

We have been sitting in these tensions of a shifting culture and of things not "working" as they have in the past AND not having a clear sense of how to do these aspects of Seeds ministry differently. We have been afraid to let go AND we are not at peace with trying to force "business as usual."

So, releasing this feels like the bravest thing we can do.

We hope that by letting them go, it will create time and space to listen and move with purpose. What will happen is an unknown for us and will probably cause us some anxiety as we say goodbye to the way we have done things.

We have also decided to do the following in relation to our young people at Seeds.

1. We are moving towards a new model of **Child Minding/Care** ministry during the Sunday worship services so that parents of young children have the ability to be spiritually formed in worship while their children have a safe and fun place to be. We have a coordinator (Ashleigh McCutcheon) who will be providing intention and structure to that time with kids between the ages of 3 and 6. More info on this to come!
2. We have formally partnered with the **Bergthaler Youth Ministry**, to be a part of their Junior Youth and Senior Youth programs. Currently, some of our Seeds youth have made connections with these programs and our hope is to strengthen this connection. For now, this partnership includes 1) intentionally encouraging Seeds youth to connect with the program by highlighting it and what is happening there. 2) Offering the Exchange as a venue for events 3) financially supporting the program 4) inviting people interested in leading/sponsoring, to join the youth pastor Richard Bage.

We live in an ever changing world that puts a great deal of stress on us as a church. It is hard to say goodbye to programs that intend to meet the spiritual needs of our young people, and

yet we know for sure that these programs are not fulfilling their promise. As a church community our strength does not come from our programs but from our commitment to make Jesus real with our lives and our resources.

One of the things that has been affirmed at Seeds is that caring about kids is NOT dependent on "Sunday school". Spiritual formation of young people happens at Seeds...as we ALL come around the Table, as we relate and care for the kids among us in informal albeit intentional ways. There are many stories of kids that feel loved at Seeds, and feel part of the community, and have ways of encountering the reality of Jesus in worship and in the people they interact with! We have seen how organic relationships between the generations in our community has developed. We believe this is one of our strengths!

Our core values of being open, connected and responsive, will not change as we move in this direction, but will continue to shape our future. We move forward with hope that our calling as a community will be worked out in new and refreshing ways. We trust that God is with us as we discern the future of "making Jesus real" to our children and youth.

Many of you have been a part of this conversation and process and we are thankful for your vulnerable participation. We would appreciate more input and conversation going forward. If you have any questions, you can talk to any of the Vision Team.

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We thank you for your support as we set this direction.

The Vision Team