

THE ENVIRONMENT

What Does It Feel Like?

As a simple exercise, re-sensitize yourself to how it feels to be a first-time visitor by attending a church where no one knows you. Make notes on what the church does and doesn't do well. Test the results against what you see happening at your church and what you hear in the follow-up with your visitors.

Additional Support

- Find three or four people in your community who are willing to be “secret” visitors to your church. Provide them with a checklist and have them give feedback about their experiences.

What's That Smell?

Sights, sounds, and yes, smells are key to making your youth ministry a place to remember – for all the RIGHT reasons. Take a walking tour of the rooms you use for your ministry. What do you smell? If there is odor – parents will think twice about leaving their children in your care. Make certain the nursery and children's areas are properly disinfected and tidied. Decorate areas so they are bright, cheerful and inviting.

Additional Support

- Empty trash cans after each class rather than just at the end of the day. Have a volunteer regularly check the bathrooms to see that they are well stocked and clean. Also, visit other churches and classrooms to get decorating ideas.

Classroom Spaces

Use furniture that is the appropriate size for the child. Set up part of the room for table work and part of the room as open space. Teens enjoy a space that they can relax and feel comfortable in.

- 2 Teachers/Classroom
- Windows in Doors



Other Spaces

Provide low shelves for storage so that the children can help to keep the room orderly. The children can also get the items that they need for weekly use.



Create classroom rules that are easy for young children to understand. It is helpful to add visuals that remind them of appropriate behavior.

Older students need to be included in the creation of the classroom rules. It can be done as a group project at the beginning of the school year. Allowing them to participate in the creation process helps them to have ownership.

Post the agreement and have each student sign it.

A prayer table encourages the children to add their prayer request each week. Make the table sacred, yet inviting to the children in your classroom.

Use time during the gathering circle to help children understand how to use the prayer tools.



Centers

Inspired by ideas from Conscious Discipline - www.consciousdiscipline.com

Heart Space

The Heart Space can be created in a corner in the room and is not a time-out space, but rather an area the children can go to when they are feeling cranky, out of sorts, want some time apart or need to regain their composure. It is a place that is filled with tools that they can use to learn how to maintain control when angry, upset or frustrated.

- Set up your Heart Space in the corner of the classroom that is away from distractions.
- Label the center and have picture reminders of relaxation techniques. These can be put into a book so the children can refer to them.



- Furnish the space with pillows, rugs and other things that are soft to the touch.
- Fill the space with items that will give the children the opportunity to calm themselves and regain their composure.



Heart Space Rules

- One person at a time
- The teacher can ask the child if they would like to go to the Heart Space.
- Students can elect to go on their own accord
- Friends can suggest classmates go to the Heart Space

Wish You Well Board

From www.consciousdiscipline.com

The Wish You Well Board's purpose is to let the children know that they are an important part of the Spiritual community whether they are present or not. A photo of each child is mounted on a magnet and as the children arrive for the day they put their photo in the center of the heart. The photos of those not present are left on the board surrounding the heart. During the circle time all members of the Spiritual heart are blessed and sent well wishes.



This activity creates a sense of family and belonging. It also creates connections. When people feel connected, they are more willing to participate in the activities of the group.

Kindness Tree

From www.consciousdiscipline.com



The Kindness Tree is a way to encourage the children to look for the best. Each time a kindness is noticed, a heart is placed on the tree.

At the end of the day, the kindness are counted up and acknowledged.

We Care Center

The We Care Center is a place for the children to create notes of care and love to give to others in the classroom or to take home to family members.



This center encourages the children to think of others and to pay attention to what others might be feeling.

