

## ROOTS

### The Middle School Ministry at AACRC

***They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in season and whose leaves do not wither. Whatever they do prospers.***

Psalm 1:3

#### Goals:

- To be more intentional in our ministry to middle school students
- To eliminate overlap resulting from having separate and independently operating middle school programs
- To provide a time and place where parents can interact with their children in a church context
- To give students (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades) a time to be together, framed by a renewed focus on mission and service
- To help decrease the “busy-ness” in the lives of middle school students
  - Number of meetings per month
  - Number of retreats attended per year

#### Values:

Relationships, faith, doubt, doing life together, simplicity, stewardship of time and resources

#### Meeting Times:

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of each month, 6:30-8:30 pm

- Same night as GEMS/Cadets, to help with logistics for multi-grade level families (GEMS/Cadets will be for students in grades 2-5)
- Gives families “off” nights the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of each month
  - Family time at home
  - Reduce the “busy-ness” in the lives of middle school students

#### Meeting Structure:

Flexible. Meetings would vary in order to provide the students with a balance of time for study, worship, service, fun, break-out sessions into same-gender groupings, etc.

#### Retreats per Year:

A typical year would have two retreats. The students would have one year during their middle school years during which they would attend three retreats.\*

- One Winter
- One Summer
- Gender Specific retreat on a rotational basis  
i.e.: one year Father-son retreat; following year Mother-daughter retreat; third year can be an “off year”. These would blend with the Family Ministries program.

*\*Currently it is possible for Middle School students, who attend both MSYG & GEMS/Cadets, to attend 4 separate overnight retreats per year -- (MSYG winter retreat, Cadets winter ski-trip, GEMS spring retreat or Cadets spring campout, MSYG summer retreat.)*

#### Service: To bring God’s Kingdom in this world

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*

Luke 4:18-19

- Middle School specific projects
- Intergenerational projects

**Paracletes:**

The word paraclete comes from the Koine Greek word παράκλητος, which means “one who comes alongside.” This signifies “one who consoles or comforts, one who encourages or uplifts.”

As part of the Roots program, each middle school student will be paired with a paraclete from the congregation. Paracletes would be volunteers from the congregation and would include, but not be limited to, the youth leaders working with the students.

- Prayer partner, encourager, one to seek the teen out at church, etc.
- Staff would assist paracletes in establishing a relationship with the teens (i.e. providing good starter questions to ask, providing times for the students and their paraclete to spend time together, etc.)
- Paracletes would commit, at a minimum, to being paired with a student through their freshman year of high school.

**How does this all fit with Family Ministries?**

- Intentional time for parents to connect with their kids on some of those “off” Wednesdays
- Frees up time to allow for some Father-Son, Father-Daughter, Mother-Daughter, Mother-Son events
- Development of Pizza Night (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month) into time spent with pastoral staff for the first half an hour of their meeting time.
- Allows older members of the congregation a way to interact with teens (becoming a paraclete)
- Having planned Family Ministries events on any 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday

Current Strengths	Strengths Maintained
Same Gender Mentoring	--Same Gender Breakout Sessions at Youth Meetings --Paracletes
Fun	--Flexibility to allow for fun and a time to unwind
Inclusion of Internationals	--Advertise Roots to international teens, and their families.
Junior Counselors	--Students could still volunteer as junior counselors to GEMS and Cadets during their high school years
Service Projects	--Consolidate service projects to have a greater impact and focus --Introduce intergenerational projects
Current Weaknesses	Weaknesses Addressed
Silo Ministries (retreats/curriculum planned independently) Students tend to choose between ministries	--One ministry program
Need for a “critical mass” for a program to run	--Numbers not limited by gender
Teens begin to “fall out of love” with GEMS/Cadets	--New, exciting program to look forward to
Middle School Teens are “lost in the shuffle”	--Program specifically designed around their needs --More teen centered (paracletes)
Overall “busy-ness”	--Give students “off” weeks --Reduce number of retreats

