

GROW GROUP REPORT 25TH JULY 2021

Submitted by Megan James

Over the past two years, St Mark's has had the privilege of undertaking a "Grow" journey. This has been a learning and mentoring process, facilitated by experienced lay workers and Pastors from the Lutheran Church of Australia Child Youth and Family Ministry Department known as "Grow Ministries". Our coaches Pastor Nigel Rosenzweig, Rachel Schilling and Vicki Rochow guided us through these learnings founded firmly in biblical truths and layered with modern social research.

The goal was to encourage and inspire our congregation to *create a healthy intergenerational culture that nurtures faith for life.*

BACKGROUND

In 2019, St Mark's Dalby was invited to join a "cluster" with Trinity Lutheran Church in Chinchilla for a Grow Ministries Coaching "journey". A group of people from St Mark's took part in an initial information workshop where we learnt what the grow coaching journey was all about and were introduced to the 10 Guiding Principles of Effective Child, Youth and Family Ministry (attached*).

Following this the congregation agreed to enter a two-year agreement at the cost of \$3700. This commitment covered team workshop, six full-day cluster workshops, a myriad of workbooks, presentations and resources, access to our coaches for mentoring and support, and the opportunity to download free resources from Grow Ministries site. Over the two years this represented excellent value for money. Coaching of this depth and standard in the corporate world would have been at least five or six times that amount.

From the outset it was clear that the content was cleverly designed to step us through a process, it was firmly founded in biblical teachings, as well as being informed by the latest social research the modern studies of faith formation, theology, and leadership.

THE ST MARK'S GROW GROUP

The group grow consisted of John Hensel, Cameron Brauer, Lois Strand, Alexandria Kruger, Carlin Ruhle, Megan James, April Strand, Evan Reichelt, Joel Pukallus, Kirstine Brauer, Aimee Johnston, and Jacinta Hensel. Other congregational members including Glenn and Audrey Fresser, Chris and Kerin Kowald, MaryAnn Kessler, Ken Von Pein, and Des and Val Steinhardt took part in a number of the cluster workshops.

Our Grow Group has evolved over the two years with some members having to retire for various reasons and new members stepping in part way through the journey. This has created some challenges with inconsistency of leadership, but has also created wonderful opportunities where our group has been enriched with different members offering fresh views and different perspectives. We are blessed to have people of different generations involved.

There were a number of set workshops with our coaches. In between each workshop, we had activities to complete. We kept in touch via messenger, email, had in-person and zoom meetings.

It's worth noting that during our Grow journey we also had the installation of a new Pastor and a global pandemic – which added challenges but in some ways also helped us become more determined to connect. It also made the message that 'church is not a building' hit home loud and clear!



PRE-CLUSTER TEAM TRAINING

In our pre-cluster team meeting, we explored leadership and team roles. Following this we developed our own Dalby Grow Group Covenant.

As members of the St Mark's Dalby Grow Group, this is our commitment to each other:

We thank God for bringing us together and we celebrate this opportunity to serve Him with enthusiasm. As we walk beside each other, may our discussions and decisions be underpinned by our congregation's guiding principles to be Christ-Centred, Spirit-guided, encouraging, inclusive and witnessing to the gospel.

We will communicate honestly with each other, with warmth and clarity, encouraging our church family to come on the journey with us. We'll stay focussed on our purpose, and seek to discover what is best for God's church as a whole.

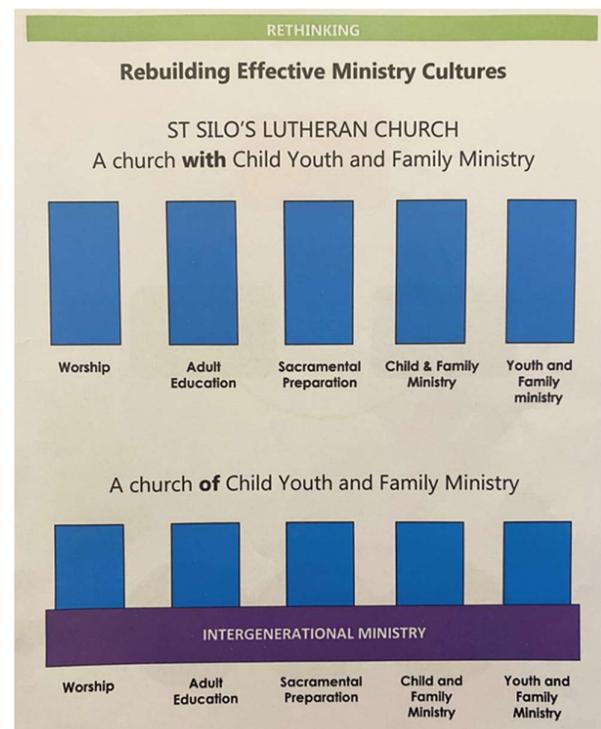


We'll embrace conflict as a natural part of growth and we'll take the time to reflect so that we may evaluate our learnings, be willing to try new ways, praise God in all we do, and wrap everything in prayer.

Over time, we developed a vision for our Grow Journey. It is our shared story of future hope that St Mark's will be **A welcoming community overflowing with disciples of Christ, actively responding to God, and empowering each other in authentic relationships to serve, love, grow in faith.**

WORKSHOP 1: RETHINKING (26th October 2019)

- Learnt the practice dwelling in the word (which we did at each workshop)
- Exploring ways to be a more vibrant congregation that equips people of all ages with the skills they need to lead ministries
- Thinking about how society has changed
- Being willing to move away from a traditional "silo" style ministry to an intergenerational ministry.
- Learning about how faith forms – Head (informing – content), Hands (transforming – Action) and Heart (forming – relationships).
- Overview of the ten guiding principles of effective child, youth and family ministry: leadership, intergenerational, Faith at Home, Mentoring, Lifelong Faith Formation, Peer Relationships, Personal Crisis, Gifts and Talents, Acts of Service, Missional.

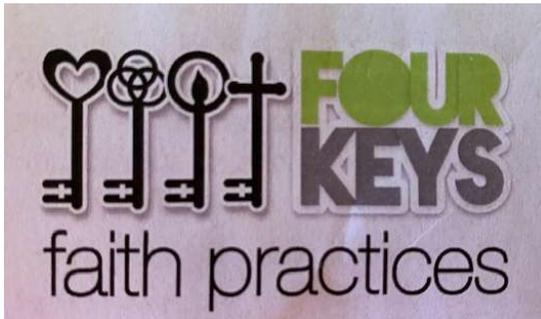


WORKSHOP 2: UNDERSTANDING INTERGENERATIONAL (1 February 2020 - Chinchilla)

- Biblical foundations of passing on faith from one generation to the next
- Looking at the different generations and how society has changed
- Looking at the five essential parts of congregational life caring, celebrating, learning, praying and serving.



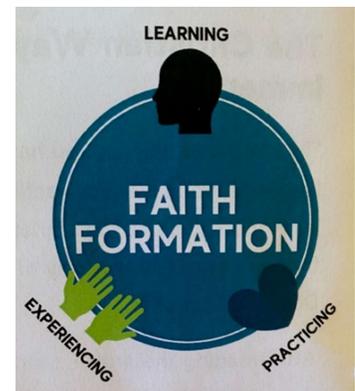
WORKSHOP 3: FAMILY FAITH FORMATION (8 August 2020)



- Exploring the changing shape of “families”
- Learning the keys to supporting and encouraging faith at home – caring conversations, devotions, service, rituals and traditions.
- Resourcing and equipping families to share faith at home.

WORKSHOP 4: LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION (14 Nov 2020)

- Revisiting the head, heart, hands model of faith formation and the five elements of congregational life.
- Exploring the characteristics of different life stages and how we as a congregation serve and connect with people in these different life stages
- Revisiting key faith practices of caring conversations, devotions, service and rituals and traditions.



WORKSHOP 5: MISSIONAL FAITH FORMATION (17 April 2021)

- Challenged to think about “mission” as being part of our culture rather than a separate “program”.
- Understanding the culture of our time including digital technology, the dramatic change of increasing diversity in religious beliefs and the declining transmission of faith from one generation to the next.
- Considering how to expand and extend the church’s presence in the general community, and provide pathways for people to consider or reconsider the Christian faith.



WORKSHOP 6: LEADERSHIP (17 July 2021)

- Revisit our Grow Journey and the key learnings
- Learn the five steps of leadership – effective leadership, a good plan, a team approach, hard work, perseverance.
- Celebrated the conclusion of the formal part of our Grow journey with prayer and blessing.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As a Grow Group we are planning to meet with TEAM soon to brainstorm how what we've learnt through Grow can be intentionally woven into our regular practices at St Mark's. It's not really about bringing in any new programs or project but a continual renewing of our minds and the way we think about our culture and faith formation at St Mark's. All members are welcome to explore these learnings! Some possible next steps include:

- Lantern Festival in August a way to connect with and serve our broader community
- Exploring how we connecting and communicate as a church family – how can we better share news and prayer requests with members?
- Sharing Grow learnings from the workshops and Grow Resources with all St Mark's family
- Cementing some Growing Faith Moments as St Mark's tradition (ie. Back to school blessing, graduation blessing)
- Weaving ideas from Grow into other existing activities like Christmas Live Nativity, Holiday Fun Time, Kids Zone, CHAOS Youth and other St Mark's groups.

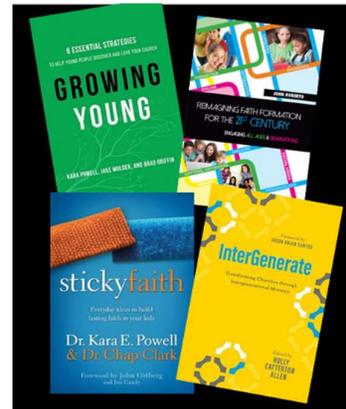
RESOURCES

We will be sharing (via church notices, bulletin and facebook) recommended articles and books to read and ideas for faith at home activities. To get you started here are a few ideas:

Check out the Grow Ministries Website – www.growministries.com.au There are so many resources and great articles on this site! Also recommend following Grow Ministries on facebook, YouTube and Pintrest.

Recommended books to read:

- Reimagining Faith for the 21st Century (free and downloadable) from <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/books.html>
- Intergenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry by Holly Catterton Allen
- Growing Young Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, et al
- Sticky Faith Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids by Chap Clark and Kara Powell



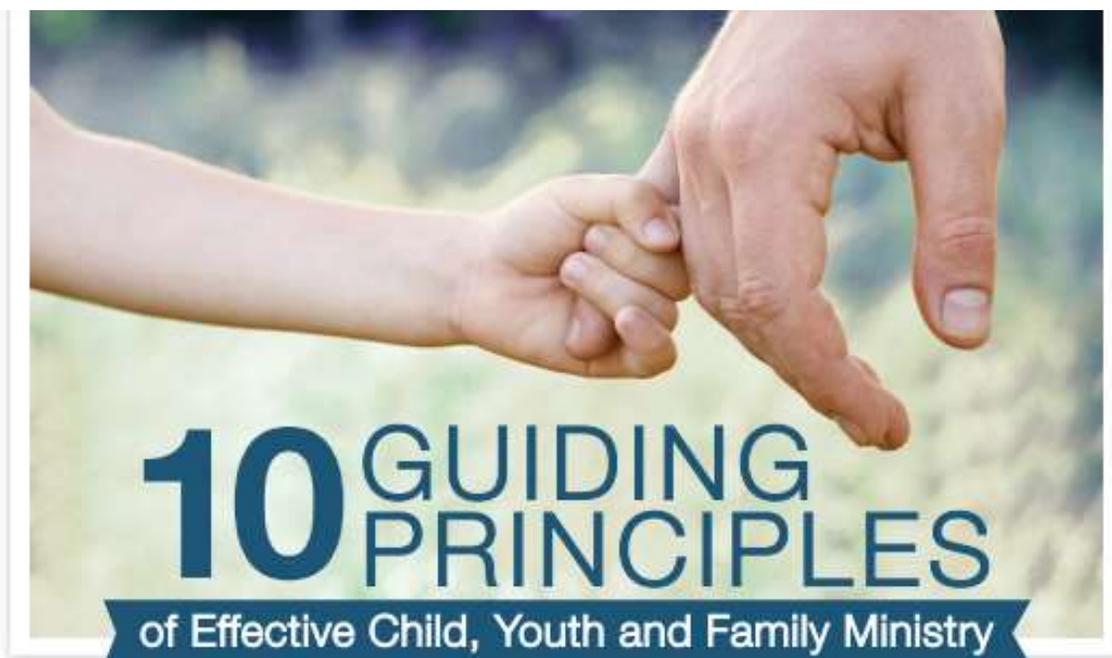
THANK YOU

I'd like to genuinely thank all members of the Grow Group. Evan's beautiful spiritual leadership keeping us focussed on Christ and his love and grace, started us off with the right tone for our team. Thanks to John, Cameron, Kirstine, Carlin, Alex, Lois and Joel who have joined with me to pick up parts of the leadership of the group at different times and in different ways. In the beginning we agreed to communicate honestly with each other, with warmth and clarity. We definitely did this and there were plenty of laughs along the way.

Thank you immensely to our grow coaches, especially to Rachel, whose integrity, knowledge of modern research interwoven with theology and biblical truths, her understanding of congregational life, her gentle steering, kindness and empathy were very much appreciated.

Thank you to the congregation for supporting us through financial support, encouragement and prayer. This may be the end of the two year learning journey, but we will continue to learn and grow together as a St Mark's family.

Megan James 25/7/2021



The goal of Grow Ministries is to support and equip congregations to move from isolated programs for children and young people to an intergenerational ministry culture that nurtures faith for life.

1 LEADERSHIP

Leaders in homes and congregations have a strong understanding of the nature and practices of effective child, youth and family ministry, and their role within it.

2 INTERGENERATIONAL

Meaningful intergenerational church experiences are intentional and valued.

3 FAITH AT HOME

Faith is integrated into family identity and practice.

4 MENTORING

Children and young people have multiple adult mentors of vital faith.

5 LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION

People of all ages are discipled in faith through the different stages of life.

6 PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Faith formation is encouraged by building Christian relationships through quality, age-specific ministry.

7 PERSONAL CRISIS

People of all ages are engaged in a Christian community that provides support during times of personal crisis.

8 GIFTS AND TALENTS

Opportunities are given to discover and express gifts and talents.

9 ACTS OF SERVICE

Opportunities are given to participate in acts of service that show the love of Christ.

10 MISSIONAL

Ministry practices and approaches have a strong missional focus.