

Subject: Youth & Family Ministries

Submitted by: Holly Ferris

Spiritual Parenting Support Group

Objectives:

- ◆ Provide a support network for parents.
- ◆ Draw more families to Church.
- ◆ Provide education for parents who want to raise their children from a spiritual perspective.

Brainstorm:

- ◆ Once-a-month meetings (propose first Thursday of each month) at the Church. I think 6:30 would work...not too early so that the kids can be fed at home before, etc....and not too late to bring the kids if need be. Formal meeting 6:30-7:30. Free discussion 7:30-8:00. This will give parents the flexibility they need. If they need to leave at 7:30 to get the kids home and in bed, they won't miss the main message of the evening. If they're free to stay for another 30 minutes, the free discussion is there as well.
- ◆ Program ideas:
 - Discussions facilitated by practitioners or ministers:
 - Techniques for staying calm when you want to strangle your child
 - Easy lessons to teach your child love, joy, peace, sharing, empathy, community service spirit, etc. Address different lessons for various ages.
 - Sharing what works for each of us...various discipline techniques, reward programs, tactics for getting what we want. Share also our challenges and support each other in addressing those challenges.
 - Guest speakers to address various parenting concerns
 - Guest Speaker -- how to teach our children to protect themselves from predators
 - Guest Speaker -- techniques for teaching our children about money...savings accounts, allowances, college savings (that's more for us, etc).
 - I'm sure area psychologists might be willing to do some pro bono presentations...how to help your child through disappointing times, etc. Do we have any psychologists in the congregation? I think it would be best if these presentations were given from a spiritual perspective.
 - We can also ask local college and university child education professors to speak.
 - Book study on "Spiritual Parenting" and/or "Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline" and/or "Buddha Didn't Raise Children and Jesus Didn't Drive Carpool."

- ◇ Provide babysitting for \$3/one child, \$5/two children and \$8/three children. Ask if any of the teens are interested in making some extra money. The sitter would get the money we pay for babysitting. We'll have to monitor to see how many children come. If we need to go to two sitters, then the two babysitters would split the fees. We can require parents to e-mail us whether or not they will require babysitting each month. This will enable us to determine how many sitters we'll need.
- ◇ Love offering – part of the money to the Church, part to pay babysitter if amount collected does not equal \$20 per sitter, part into the group's fund for potential expenses (i.e. hosted Pizza and sodas, materials, etc.)
- ◇ Set up e-mail/phone network for support and communication between meetings.
- ◇ Community outreach – post flyers at pre-schools, schools and pediatric offices; run an ad or two in local papers; item for calendar sections of appropriate newspapers
- ◇ Need to make a flyer announcing the group.
- ◇ Need to have a template that can be used to publicize each month's meeting topic.
- ◇ Once the group is up and running, we'll survey the group to see what programs they'd be interested in. I bet each person has one contact for a guest speaker who would be willing to come to one of our meetings.
- ◇ Age appropriate play groups might emerge.

Next Steps:

- ◇ Talk with other parents in the congregation to see if they'll support this type of group.
- ◇ Come up with a great name for the group...I've been playing with acronyms, but haven't yet been successful in finding a good name. I've been throwing around phrases like – Parents on a Spiritual Journey, Parents Raising Joyful Kids, Parents on a Spiritual Mission, Spiritual Parents on Target (SPOT), Spiritual Parents on a Mission, Spiritual Parents Making Progress, Parenting from a Place of Joy and Love, etc. But as you can see, none of these makes a marketable acronym. I'm still thinking....
- ◇ Make flyer announcing group.
- ◇ Announce group in newsletter
- ◇ Announce group in Sunday bulletin and during announcements
- ◇ Decide on first meeting topic and get it on the calendar. Kick off in June?
- ◇ Make flyer for June meeting.
- ◇ Decide on next 2-3 meetings. Each flyer should also list the next couple of meeting dates and topics at the bottom as a teaser.
- ◇ Send meeting announcement to local newspapers for the Religious Calendar section.
- ◇ Send batch of flyers to other local RS churches.