

## June 2009 The Church on Mission

I was visiting in the home of a couple from outside our church last week. I was bragging – Yes, I was bragging! – on our VBS. We had 140 happy children cared for and taught by 60 adults and teenagers for three hours Monday-Friday. The couple I was visiting asked in amazement, “How do you get that many people to volunteer for an entire week,...during the day?”

I responded, “We have some people who are passionate about children and sharing the Gospel with them.” The person who comes to mind first is Cookie Frederick. For over six months she has volunteered her time ordering materials, leading meetings, making phone calls, soliciting leadership from our adult and teenage populations, and absorbing the disappointments that come with leadership when something falls through the cracks. I want to extend a huge “Thank You” to Cookie for inspirational leadership, dedication to the task, and a servant’s heart that goes beyond the call of duty.

I would follow that with a thank you to J Muckenfuss and his leadership and guidance for a highly successful VBS. J brings an enthusiasm to children’s ministry that is contagious. His passion and commitment to the children is evident, and it flows out to other leaders and workers. I am grateful for J’s leadership in our VBS and all the children’s ministry for which he is now leading.

And I can’t forget all the other teachers, guides, game leaders, childcare providers, kitchen workers, musicians, artists, stage producers, and skit leaders. They came, they prepared, they cared, they invested their time and energy in the spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual development of these children. They sacrificed their time for the sake of the Gospel and these children.

We were the church on mission. I hear again and again how the church is dying in America. It has become self-absorbed. It has become more focused on maintaining itself and its structures than it is about carrying out the mission of Jesus Christ. And I know there is a good deal of truth in that criticism. And I know we have to be vigilant about not letting that happen to Yates Baptist Church. But this week, we were on mission. We had 140 kids who knew without a doubt that some adults loved them and we interested in their development. They donated \$500.00 to our India mission trip. They brought close to 400 items of food to be used for the Yates Baptist Association food pantry. Some of these kids came to VBS hungry and the snack we provided was the first food they had had all day. Many of these kids were from other churches and their parents had no interest in moving to our church. That didn’t matter. This VBS was not about bringing more people to our church. It was about our church extending the mission of Jesus Christ. It may or may not bring more people to our church. It will reveal, however, that we are a church that is active, missional, and reaching out to our community.

Years ago we made a commitment to have a day VBS instead of an evening VBS. An evening VBS does increase your potential worker base. There’s no doubt about that. But a morning VBS catches children at “their best.” They have their highest level of energy and learning potential active in the morning areas compared to the end of the day when they have been in childcare or are tired from the days’ events. That’s why a morning VBS is best for the children. We do a morning VBS because it’s best for the children, not because it’s the best time for the adults. That kind of missional focus is what sets this church apart from so many.

I was proud of Yates Baptist Church this week. Oh, I’m always proud of my church, but there are some times when I want to express it clearly and give my reasons for it. A church should be a missional organism, not a bureaucratic organization. That’s what I saw this week, and I thank God for it.