

A New Season for Kids, Youth and Families



What are the changes for kids & youth?

- Our Midweek Programmes will not be changing
- Our new 10am Service will suit families with toddlers to kids in Year 8 and our new 4pm Service will suit families with kids in K-12.
- For youth in Years 9-12 we will be providing a dedicated discussion & prayer time after the sermon at our 4pm Service . We will, therefore, be winding up our present 5pm Senior High group.
- To minimise change on Sundays, in Term 4 2024 children will attend the Sunday programme that corresponds to *their school year in 2025*. Please note this change **ONLY** applies to Sunday programmes and not midweek events/camps.

Why are these changes good news for our kids & youth?

Firstly, We want our children's experience of church to be something that they enjoy AND is good for them. Research shows that kids are most likely to stick with the Christian faith into adulthood if (1) they are participating in church-wide worship services and (2) five responsible Christian adults (apart from their parents/leaders!) know the child and encourage them in their faith.* We hope to create a culture and structure where healthy relationships are supported within our church family.

Secondly, "Critical Mass" is not so much about achieving a particular number but about establishing the right culture, the right activities, the right spaces and the right people. We've all been in large group contexts where we did not feel welcome and in small gatherings where we felt "at home".

There are different ways to have fun. On Friday nights Elise and her Team have employed screens and slime, as well as craft and cookies to build community; even with smaller numbers. It's worth remembering that Elise only joined us in January! I am confident that, even with a smaller "crowd" at each service Elise and her Leaders will provide a safe, fun, and Jesus-y environment for our kids.

And thirdly, whilst families will choose the service that best works for their routine and their relationships, we understand there will be some sadness for our children (and adults!) in not being able to see all of their friends on Sundays.

So thank-you to those of you who prioritise attending church weekly. With smaller services, regular attendance becomes even more important. We don't need a cast of thousands, but we and our kids just need to know that one or two friends will be at church each week.

Midweek Matters

And I am encouraging families to **prioritise mid-week programmes** (eg Gecko and Friday Youth). From Toddlers to Year 12 we have 58 children and youth coming semi-regularly to our Sunday and midweek programmes. With your help we want to see our children, as well as the friends they invite, **regularly attend both** Sunday Services *and* Gecko Kids' Club/Friday Youth; in this way our children will experience *both* a **smaller community** on Sundays *and* a **larger peer group** through the week. Events such as KYCK and Youthworks Square One and LiT Camp provide further opportunities for our youth to connect with a larger group of Christian teens.

In recent years Gecko has seen a number of non-churched children come to faith and become established at Friday Youth. But it is also feeling fragile at present due to limited volunteer leaders and many "Sunday Kids" not attending. Will you pray that God would use this ministry to reach many un-churched kids with the gospel?

Why the change of structure for Senior High?

We are not continuing the Senior High Bible Study because, in conversation with Elise, I believe it is "one ministry too many". At present we are encouraging our mature senior youth to attend four church things: Friday Youth, Sunday Bible Study, a Sunday Service *and to consider serving*, possibly at another time-slot. Most mature Christian adults only attend two or three per week! Since these years are a time when school, sport, and social demands are only growing, we decided that three events per week is the right number for our keen beans.

We believe that, with one or two extra leaders at Friday Youth we can cater to the different spiritual and social needs of both our younger and older youth. We believe the discussion group after the sermon at our 4pm Sunday Service (which will be lead by me) will assist our youth in getting more out of the service. And we believe encouraging young people to serve at church in some way, whether at "their" service or at another time (eg Gecko), will help them to put their faith into practice.

I apologise for the changes we have seen in structure and staffing in recent years and the negative impact this may have had on you and your children. I believe, with a handful of extra leaders, this new model is both *good and sustainable* and will support our older youth as they join our growing young adult community.

Praise God for new families!

"We came because it's our local church, but we stayed because we were welcomed. It feels more like a family than a Sunday congregation. We really enjoy the opportunity to talk to others after church, it's where friendships grow. And the kids love after church as well, they go straight to the snacks!"

Chipper Pengelly

In 2024 nine new families have joined our Sunday Services! We are praying that God will bring more families to Emmanuel Church. Who can you invite to join us?