



ROSTERS...

February is the traditional season of frantic rostering in the church. Sure we were all organised back in December...but there are those pesky few gaps.



So here's a personal question:

How are your rosters looking?

Oh. I'm sorry to hear that. How did I know, without even leaving my laptop that there were unfilled rosters out there in churches across the state? Wherever there are rosters, there are gaps. It goes with the system.

One of the weaknesses of rosters is that they represent a system where there is little personal ownership of the role that needs to be filled. Rosters are generally a reflection of a sense that no one person or one team of people are passionate about the difference that the task makes to the community. People on rosters are often very faithful, servanthearted, selfless, hard working saints. But they are also often working outside their gifting, doing a job because it needs to be done. Or sometimes - even worse - those on the rosters are extremely passionate and gifted for the role, but are not released and trusted with the ministry. They are stuck in a roster system. (Please note - teams and rosters are vastly different approaches to sharing roles and tasks - but more of that another time.)

The dishwasher in my kitchen is a classic. We roster family members on to empty the dishwasher because no one wants to do it. No one is passionate about filling the cupboards with lovely clean plates and creating space in the dishwasher for more dishes in need of full immersion baptism.

Maybe there are some tasks in church community life that are just best done that way. But one thing is for sure, discipling children isn't one of them.

TIPS for managing your children's ministry roster

1. Do the 'Gideon' Manoeuvre:

Ask all of the people on the Roster if they are **passionate, gifted and called** to this ministry. Send those who aren't to see a mentor who can help them work out what they are passionate about gifted for and called to. Write them a sincere and generous letter thanking them for their service and selflessness, and release them with the great blessing and peace of God.

Villages raise children, Faith communities make disciples

This is the theme of many of the **regional training events** provided or supported by the **children's ministry network** in 2010. Watch out for the registration brochures (with the plasticine people in the header).



February 27

Essendon: BUV Regional leadership day including children and families ministry electives by Beth Barnett

March 13 BUV Tool Box Parenting Facilitator training

March 20

Bendigo: BUV Regional training day including Children and Families Ministry Stream

Geelong: Refresh Children's Ministry Network/Access Ministries training day

Moe: OAC Children's Ministry Day

March 27

Benalla Children's Ministry Network Regional training day

May 1

Frankston & Greensborough: Children's Ministry Network Training

May 8

Baptist Union of Victoria **Gathering**

May 29

Parkville: Playgroup Conference

June 19

Warnambool Children's Ministry Network Regional training day.



2) Get the Aaron and Hur Support team!

Of those people who are left, and there may only be a few, ask them this...

What is it that you need to equip and support you in the ministry that you are passionate about, gifted for and called to?



Is it regular Bible teaching and times of worship? How can this occur whilst releasing you to do the ministry you are **Passionate About, Gifted For and Called To**. Is it a budget? Is it opportunities for prayer with others in the congregation? Is it a cup of tea brought to you with a smile and a 'how was your morning?' at the end of each week's service? Whatever your small group of passionate, gifted and called leaders need, find others in your congregation who are passionate, gifted and called to providing that.



For example Tessa is all fired up for children's ministry, and Ted is all fired up for making cups of tea, Terry is a compulsive prayer and Tex just loves moving furniture. So at the end of the service, Ted makes a cup of tea, Tex stacks away the tables from Tessa's group while Terry rocks in and asks Tessa how he can pray for her and for the children she has just spent time with.

3)

If it is impossible to avoid a roster (maybe because you have so many people wanting to disciple children and not enough children?) Try to work your changes in as extended blocks as you can manage.

A different person leading every week is tough on everyone. Think back to school and the emergency teacher. Changing leader each week is like having an emergency teacher every day at school – and for the leaders it's like being an emergency teacher. Precious little fun, trust, community or belonging. 2 weeks running is always better, 4 is a great improvement again. If you can manage a term at a time – that's really getting somewhere. A year - Bingo.

Committing to tracking with kids over several years - watch out for kids who feel valued, safe, and taken seriously. The trade secret for having a fantastic time with bunches of kids is that

the more consistently you work with them, the easier it is.

Lots of children's ministry leaders are worn out by reinventing the wheel constantly. Each time their number comes up on the roster, they have re-invent the pastoral care trust, the discipline boundaries, participation ethos and basic care factor. No wonder it's hard to find volunteers for this.

Training days enrich ministry in a variety of ways:

Networking opportunities with others doing what you do and denominational/para-church leaders and trainers access to a market place of resources and demonstrations* book recommendations*big picture principles*practical how-to skills*nourishment from the Bible*prayer opportunities*interactive discussion and forums.

CMN training days address the issues of first time leaders through to cutting edge new paradigm thinkers. A great way to experience training is to attend as a whole church team. Gather up as many people from your church as you can from the **deacon to the door welcomer**, the **playgroup co-ordinator to the Pastor**. There's just a chance that

God could use all of us in His mission of hope.



4) Try the Deuteronomy 6 Dynamic

Some communities struggle to fill their rosters because they assume that removing the children from church is an important thing to do. This is worth challenging on lots of levels, but just for the moment, purely practically:

Think about being a child and having a leader who prepares, and opens the Bible with you, prays with you, listens to you, laughs with you. That's week one. The next week they come back and do it again. The third week you turn up to church and that leader says to you...

**“Hey, today we get to stay in church – both of us. Would you like me to sit with you and your family – we can listen and sing
And pray together!”**

Imagine that! If I was that kid I'd be **watching** and **modelling** myself on that leader, and somewhere tucked away in my brain would be the idea that being in church is the place for me.

5) Another way....

Perhaps you are thinking that with these utopian policies there would be no one left to lead your children. There is another way. It is often said that

“it takes a village to raise a child”

Question: What does it take to raise disciples?

Answer: A community of disciples seeking to follow Jesus together.

Whatever else we think our church might have on offer for our kids (a ripper preacher, a funky lead guitarist, an endless supply of chocolate chip biscuits at morning tea, a basket ball hoop in the hall and unsmashable windows), none of this is as valuable as a community that is **following Jesus, hot on his heels, and welcoming people of all ages to join in, learning together as he leads.**

Chewy...

The bible is like a huge packet of chewing gum.

You can reach in and take out a bit and just gnaw away on it for a long time.

A Bible bit I'm chewing on at the moment is

Hebrews 13:9

“It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace.”

What about you?

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