

## **Core Convictions Regarding Children's Ministry**

The following are the core convictions of our Children's Ministry that guide us in fulfilling our mission of seeing kids enjoy and proclaim the Good News in our great city:

**(1) Children are important!** Scriptures like Psalm 127:3-5 and Luke 17:2 remind us that children are important in God's eyes. For the most part, our center-city culture says the opposite – children are a burden to be avoided altogether, postponed indefinitely, or pushed off on someone else. We desire to cultivate a church culture that values kids.

**(2) Children have a place in the city.** For most center-city dwellers, if they do settle down and have kids, they eventually move out to the suburbs. We believe it's not only possible, but necessary for Christians to remain in the city to raise their kids. In cultivating a church culture that values kids, we seek to establish a counter-culture that affects the neighborhood for the good over the long haul. It will be hard, but we want to provide a support network that helps families stay in the city and transform it.

**(3) Children should be included in the community.** Children are born guilty of and bent on sin (cf. Psalm 51:5) and in need of salvation. Thus they are not full members of the church community and are not admitted to the Lord's Table until they have demonstrated evidence of conversion and been baptized. However, they should be welcomed and integrated into the community life (just like an adult non-believer) in the hopes that they will come to experience the living God themselves. We feel that it is mutually beneficial for kids and adults *not* to be segregated.

This conviction applies to all of community life, including Sunday gatherings for worship. In the Bible (and throughout the vast majority of church history), when the people of God were assembled in the Lord's presence, the children were included (cf. Deuteronomy 31:12-13, Joshua 8:35). We believe that children should be in the worship service with their parents as early as possible (we recommend around age 6). This exposes them to the rhythms of community life so that they can hopefully one day take their place as full-fledged members of it. Research shows that a staggering

percentage of kids raised in the church disappear from church life after leaving their high school youth group or college campus ministry. We seek to teach kids God's plan for the local church and assimilate them into its life and mission at an early age. We provide a Kids Corner for very young children as a service to parents, but even there kids are being prepared to join mom and dad in the service.

**(4) Parents take the lead.** The community plays a crucial role in the development and discipleship of its children, but the main responsibility lies with the parents, especially the fathers where possible (cf. Deuteronomy 6:7, Colossians 3:18-22). Parents do this by modeling godly living and joyful worship, by disciplining their kids, by maintaining family devotions and prayers, by cultivating caring relationships with their kids, and by teaching their children the great truths and traditions of the Christian faith. As a church we seek to do all we can to equip parents for this task.

**(5) Keep it simple.** At Immanuel we want to keep programs to a minimum. A popular trend among churches is to establish specialized ministries to address the particular needs of groups based on age, sex, marital status, and even career fields. While it is true that there are unique needs for specific groups that must be cared for differently, Immanuel believes that the best ministry happens organically. As an intentionally small church whose goal is to constantly plant other churches, simplicity is an essential value. We want to avoid elaborate programs that require intensive manpower and/or cause too many people to miss the Sunday worship services.

**(6) Be Missional.** Absolutely everything we do as a church has to contribute to our mission to proclaim the Good News in the UIC Area. We seek to reach our own kids with the gospel, reach other neighborhood kids with the gospel, and train children to reach their world with the gospel. Children's Ministry at Immanuel is not about entertaining our kids or insulating them from the world or making them into nice, clean-cut 'Christian' kids, but it exists to help us reach our neighborhood for Christ and make the kids that we encounter into radical, sold-out, life-long followers of him.