

Engaging Children and Youth in Matthew 25
2023 APCE Annual Event Workshop

Presented by Jenna Campbell
Director of Children and Youth Ministry, First Presbyterian Church, Stillwater, OK
jennacampbell28@gmail.com
www.stillwaterfpc.org

This workshop will guide participants to weave a Matthew 25 emphasis throughout children's and youth ministry, focusing on deeper reflection on the "least of these" and how our faith calls us to respond.

Children's Ministry

Seeing Jesus theme in Sunday School – workshop rotation curriculum written by Jenna Campbell. Focus verse - Matthew 25:31-46

- Hungry - Stone soup, made compassionate meals, filling little free pantry
- Thirsty - Enviroscope demonstration (effects of water pollution)
- Welcome – refugees, extending welcome
- Poor - Kiva.org – microlending, Spent simulation (www.playspent.org)
- Sick - Health care kits, health care access
- In Prison – cards for prison ministry

Youth Ministry

Year-long study on mission (colonial vs. post-colonial), poverty, and race – used Journey of Justice curriculum by Youth Mission Co (www.youthmissionco.org)

Year-long Matthew 25 study – Seeing Jesus

- Justice Monopoly
- Hunger – stories of those experiencing hunger
- Water justice issues
- Refugee simulation
- Health care access
- Poverty – choices to be made
- Restorative justice vs. retributive justice

Intergenerational Focus

- 21 Day Race Equity Challenge
- Anti-Racism Group – conversations with the Anti-Racism Group and our youth
- Racial wealth gap simulation (www.bread.org)
- Meeting with state legislator – advocacy
- Raising White Kids Book study
- Intergen VBS – Will you be my neighbor? (written by Jenna Campbell)
- Pay It Forward Challenge

PAY IT FORWARD CHALLENGE

Brief Description of FPC Stillwater's Pay It Forward Challenge

In the fall of 2021, 31 1st-12th graders each received \$150 from a \$5,000 estate bequest. The participants received the money and instructions (and inspiration!) during a Pay It Forward Kickoff. They then had six weeks to complete the challenge to use the money to make a difference in the world. A brochure was given with information about the challenge for families to use to engage their children in discussion and prayer around how they would use the money. Each participant committed to sharing the story of their own particular act of generosity through words, art, photos, or video. After eight weeks, the congregation gathered for a Pay It Forward Celebration worship service, led by the Pay It Forward challenge participants, where stories of generosity and impact were shared and the congregation was presented with a mini Pay It Forward challenge of \$2 for each worshipper. A booklet and video with the project descriptions was shared.

In the end, 23 different organizations/projects benefited from the Pay It Forward challenge and an additional \$8,500 was raised as participants multiplied their impact.

STEPS TO HOST YOUR OWN PAY IT FORWARD CHALLENGE

Form a Pay It Forward Planning Team

Gather 3-5 people whose creativity can guide this process.

Set a Goal and Age of Participants

Determine the goal and purpose of your Pay It Forward Challenge.

Is it for children? Youth? Adults? Intergenerational?

FPC goal: to empower children and youth to make a difference through impactful giving.

Determine a Funding Source

Operating budget? Endowment money? Unrestricted gifts? Generous members?

FPC money: The \$5,000 we used for the challenge was from an estate gift which the Session directed to children's and youth ministry from their request to run a Pay It Forward Challenge.

Determine Registration Process

Knowing how many will be participating in the challenge before the challenge starts allows you to know the exact amount each person will get (if you have a cap on the level of funding you're able to offer).

How will you know who wants to participate? What is the deadline for signing up?

- Online registration?
- In-person sign up?
- OR if you don't have a cap on funding, anyone who attends the kickoff event gets the money

Include on registration:

- Publicity release

- Acknowledgement of rules (see below)

FPC: online registration, deadline set the Wednesday before the Sunday kickoff. View our registration at <https://stillwaterfpc.breezechms.com/form/payitforward>

Determine Amount and How to Give the Money

Amount is dependent on how many participate and the level of funding. Determine if you'll give the money in cash (more readily available to use) or check (more secure, but harder to prepare).

FPC: \$150 in cash (placed in a sealed envelope with a Pay It Forward sticker)

Determine Start and End Dates

How long will you offer the challenge? Long enough to give time for projects to be completed, but not too long that it drags out.

FPC: six weeks to give the money, eight weeks from Kickoff to Celebration (to include time to gather the stories, pictures, etc.)

Determine Rules

What rules are needed for the challenge?

FPC identified two rules:

- The money could not be shared with immediate family
- Participants must commit to sharing their story of giving in some way (writing, video, pictures, drawing)

Determine Kickoff Programming

How will you kick off the challenge?

- If it's for children/youth: will you invite families to attend? (recommended)
- What ideas and inspiration will be shared to get participants thinking in creative ways about how they might use the money?

FPC Pay It Forward Kickoff Details:

- Sunday morning during Sunday school hour for children/youth and their families
- Had a speaker to inspire: local recent high school graduate who has started her own foundation. Shared both her inspiration for starting her foundation and other ideas to inspire the participants.
- Bags for each participant that contained: the envelope of money, a brochure for families on the program, a handheld mirror (using our Reflect the Light theme). The brochure included:
 - Goal of the challenge
 - Rules
 - Encouragement to multiply the gift (by inviting others to be generous)
 - Reflection questions for families to discuss
 - Instructions on how to share the story
 - Prayer
- Celebratory atmosphere – balloon arch where participants were called one by one and handed their bags, pictures of each participant

Determine How Stories Will Be Shared

- Writing, drawing, photos, video (or a combination of these)
- Provide deadline for sharing the story
- How to collect the stories – email, text, Google Drive link (FPC used all of these)

Determine How the Challenge Will End and Stories Shared

- Worship? Program? Social Media? Local News?

FPC's Pay It Forward Celebration:

- Worship service led by Pay It Forward participants
- Sermon – children and youth sharing stories of impact and generosity
- Video of Pay It Forward projects
- Children and youth invited the congregation to a mini pay it forward challenge, giving \$2 in cash to each worshipper and encouraged them to use it to make a difference.

Videos were shared on social media, the local newspaper ran a story on one of the projects, and the Synod focused a podcast on the challenge and one particular project.

Impact of the Pay It Forward Challenge

- Empowered kids – I can make a difference
- Seeing needs
- Learning about the needs
- Family conversations
- Leadership opportunities
- Inspiring the congregation