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## *The Chimes*

## *July & August 2016*

**NEW MINISTRY PLAN**

**APPOINTMENT OF MINISTRY COORDINATOR**

**AWANA FOR CHILDREN & ADULTS**

**PLANNING WORSHIP FOR UNCHURCHED**

*What is this All About?*

“What about the Ministry Plan that people are talking about lately, the New Ministry Plan for our the church? Why are we not getting enough details about what is going on with this new plan?

I am sure you will hear such questions over and over again at least from some people in the church even though information about this new ministry has been delivered time to time during the last two years of its making. One reason why people keep asking such questions might be that many of us (including me) do not recollect much of the past memories in mind amidst so many other things going on in life. Extracts from bulletin announcements, committee minutes and Chimes articles have been collected, therefore, at the bottom of this letter with the hope that they might help us remember the long path we tread in this journey since November 2014.

I take much pleasure to announce to you that finally God has blessed us with opening a way where we can attempt something new in an effort to reach out to new families of our community and neighborhood for God. The new ministry is all about leading children and young families to a faith and to a relationship with God. This is nothing but a plan that is in compliance with God’s call to us all who follow him to “Go, therefore, and make disciples” Matt. 28:19. Certainly it will be our joy to passionately work toward transforming lives in a way that many might newly experience God and live in fellowship with him.

As a result of our prayerful yearning for this new ministry, God has provided us a new ministry coordinator, Shanna Bude, to lead us in an AWANA based ministry. Shanna will work with us from July 1st 2016. She is a graduate from the Garrett Evangelical Seminary, Evanston IL with having two master’s degrees: Master in Christian Education and Master in Theological Studies. She is also gifted with many skills that we believe will be beneficial to the ministry that we are passionate about. Her fluency in Spanish language could also be an added blessing, possibly to reach out to Hispanic community around us.

*What is AWANA?*

AWANA is an acronym for “Approved Workers are Not Ashamed” (2 Tim 2:15). When we are called by God and presented ourselves to work in God’s vineyard, we become the Approved Workers of God or people who are called and chosen by God. If we are approved workers of God, we should “not be ashamed” to share the gospel to others.

AWANA is a bible based children program built in the pattern of boys scout or girls scout (or of VBS). It is designed to excite children with games, competition and learning bible. In other words, it is an efficient tool to lead children to a relationship with God. Since AWANA is believed to be very attractive to children, it is possible that many children of our community along with our own Sunday school children would benefit from it.

*The Plan:*

We plan to adopt AWANA on Sunday mornings at 10:15 am, which is after the conclusion of 9 am service. An adult AWANA (or parents’ group) too is planned simultaneously with children program to encourage parents of those children attending AWANA into a worship experience. Adult meeting is expected to start little after the start of the children’s program, that is around 10:45 am, however, both children and adult programs will conclude at 11:45 am following which a light luncheon could be served.

In the event of a long planning of this new ministry, some of the initial ambiguities about the details, such as, where, when and how have changed to a certain extent and now we have started to see things more clearly from where we have first begun in two years ago. Now we know that this new ministry is not primarily about planting a new church or adding a second worship service, although such possibilities cannot be dismissed entirely and such outcomes could eventually be the result of this new ministry. But our primary focus will always be about leading people into an experience with God and to a living relationship with him. Certainly it will be a life-changing ministry among children as well as young families of our community.

Isn’t it exciting to be part of a ministry of leading children of our community to know the love of Christ, particularly, those who never had a chance to know the love of Christ before? Isn’t it important that we all need to be in this ministry since this is what Jesus wanted us to do? He said: *"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me" (Mt. 9:37).* AWANA has a record of leading children to faith for life. One survey says: 93% of those who grew up with AWANA held that faith all the way toward the end of their life. What else might give us such a joy and blessing than being involved in this blessed ministry of changing lives forever? Now God has brought this opportunity before us and challenges us to be part of this adventure in faith.

*Plan Details:*

As an initial step, we are planning to incorporate AWANA into this year’s Vacation Bible School, which will be held in July 24-28th. Using AWANA as VBS curriculum will also give us an idea how this really works. Moreover, it will become a rehearsal for the volunteers who will be implementing this program on regular basis during the Sunday services starting from September 12th .this year. AWANA has somewhat similar elements of VBS but with a different style of operation. Please help us out with the VBS this year as you have been doing it before.

*How can you help out with AWANA program in the fall?*

Certainly God wants to use your gifts, skills and abilities into this unique opportunity that has come to our doorsteps. Of course, we always had passion for bringing people to Christ although we didn’t know how; we didn’t have a clear plan for that before. Now God has provided us with a plan and now he is calling us to act. I hope you are excited about involving in this great opportunity that has come to you.

How can you help?

1. Look around your neighborhood and identify those kids that are not at church. Gather as much information as possible, particularly the name of the household, address and phone number (if available), and the number of children (and their names), Next step is to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which means, pray for those names with you for a full week before you see an opportunity to invite them to AWANA. While inviting them, please take with you a beautifully designed invitation card provided by the church and hand them over to them.
2. Provide that information to the AWANA office communication team in the church; they will also send a follow up invitation with all the details of the program.
3. Also think about the kids in your family who live in town but are not at church or at Sunday school. The communication team will make all the efforts to reach out to them.
4. Be a volunteer. There are many opportunities to serve in this new ministry of changing lives and your involvement in this will make all the difference to God.

You may choose to be at the welcome desk, be a small class instructor, chaperon, games instructor, kitchen help, help in set up and take down, help in cleanups. Volunteer in communication team or in publicity or in walking team to put door hangers. Volunteers needed as tech help and help in social media.

1. Prayer team volunteer: The ministry needs a strong dedicated prayer team who will pray at certain time each day asking God to open doors for those who need to be led toward God. Our efforts will be successful only if the Holy Spirit prepares the hearts ahead of our contacts. If you are interested in being part of the prayer team, please provide your details including what kind of commitment you will make; such as, what specific days and time of the week you will be praying. Prayers should be intentional and passionate.
2. *THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST:*
3. Here below I am bringing to your memory the past two years of our journey in making this ministry a possibility. Please retain this newsletter safely so that you may answer the questions people might ask you regarding this new ministry.
4. This new ministry has been the work of the whole congregation; it was not the will of a few individuals alone. The following pieces of information explain how the entire church has been constantly in the loop on the developments of this ministry idea since its beginning. The congregation has been appraised of about it through committee reports, bulletins announcements and newsletter articles in the past two years.

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**COMMITTEE MINUTES AND REPORTS:**

*Worship committee minutes:* *September 8, 2014*

Pastor’s report: “We may need to hire a paid staff member to lead the new worship service.”

*Education Committee: September 2, 2014*

“Our church would like to hire a worship leader to begin a contemporary service. Pastor Harsha said that all of the committees of the church will have input about this idea.”

*SPRC meeting minutes: January 19, 2015*

Pastor shared a new idea for our congregation: a church within a church or a next generation church. At this point we are losing members faster than we are gaining them. We would be looking at creating a different environment as well as maintaining what we have now. The Methodist Conference will help with expenses and make a 3 year commitment. Three things that would need to take place: 1. Full support from the congregation, 2. Form a committee, 3. Hire a worship leader. Pastor is in the process of gathering information.

*Ad Council minutes: January 27, 2015*

“Harsha talked about next generation church. Information on why and how was discussed. Harsha worked with Enrique Gonzales on how to make this happen. Plans for a dinner meeting on 2/20/15 to discuss are in the works. We all need to think about this, our fathers did this church, now it is our task.”

*Worship Committee minutes: February 2, 2015*

“Pastor talked about the next generation church. He has observed and spoken to other pastors that have had success reaching this age group. A meeting is set or Feb 20th to invite our church leadership to come together and do some brainstorming.”

*Ad Council May 20, 2015*

In January 2015, at its first meeting a committee was formed to work on a next generation worship. It is crucial – in 3 years 100+ people have been removed from membership and we are not adding new members. Our Sunday school and youth ministry are having problem. Only 2 or 3 attend. A very few people are doing all things in church. Harsha attended Boot Camp for developing new ministry.

*Ad Council October 27, 2015*

We need to support 20% of the new position’s salary. $24,000 will come from conference and $3500 from SMUMC. This will run through the budget.

Ad Council January 26, 2016

Pastor is working diligently on filling the new position. Looking for a local person. Getting frustrated. Needs skills of reaching out to the community. Anyone you have in mind? All we need to find a person good at working in the community.

*Christian Ed. March 1, 2016*

Pastor Harsha explained a program that he would like to see developed at the church. It is called AWANA. It is a program that involves youth of ages 3-18 and operates like VBS and Boy/Girl Scouts, meaning there are games, bible lessons and a badge system of progression. It will be open to the community and youth will ask to bring friends. The basis of the program is to deepen the youth’s faith in Christ. Pastor Harsha invited the AWANA missionary to explain to the church about the program. Pastor Harsha encouraged everyone at the meeting and all the members of the congregation to stay for the presentation this Sunday and to support this mission.

*Ad Council March 22, 2016*

Describing AWANA program, Harsha said: we are thinking of a program to be done on Sunday mornings. At present we will introduce it at the Vacation Bible School and then continue from the Fall 2016. One person has been interviewed but didn’t accept the job. There is a pastor’s daughter in Evansville who was recommended for us from the Conference DS might probably be interviewed after the Easter. It was told that she would be a valuable candidate for this position.

*Finance Committee April 19, 2016*

Pastor Harsha will be meeting the potential person for the new ministry coordinator position this week. The salary needs to be negotiated since the candidate is a theological graduate from Garrett Evangelical Seminary, IL.

**BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

*Bulletin Feb. 08, 2015*

It is obvious that we miss younger folks in worship and probably we all worry about it. More than the church and its future, our deepest concern should be about leading our children and grandchildren to a life in Christ. It is wrong to assume that the younger generation doesn’t care anymore about spirituality or a life in Christ. …. A gathering of those who have concern for young families, have heart to lead them to Christ, is planned for Friday, February 20th at 5 pm at the church fellowship hall. We seriously discuss what is at stake and decide how we could go about it by envisioning and planning something new that draws our younger folks to Christ. A supper is provided by the help of UM Conference. Please RSVP by filling your information on the card provided in the bulletin and hand it over to the ushers. Everyone’s prayer and participation in this effort is very much anticipated.

(This announcement repeated on **February 15th** as well).

*Bulletin March 22, 15*

A meeting of the Next Generation church planning will be held this Saturday (28th) at 1 pm. The members as well as all who are enthusiastic about this are invited to participate in this visioning process. Your input and prayerful support is very much anticipated.

*Bulletin April 26, 15*

Aren’t you excited about the work in progress, the Next Generation church that is aimed at reaching out to young families of our community? Please intentionally pray for God’s guidance to every step we take in faith will be in the right direction. In order to equip all of us for this venture a book reading and discussion is suggested so as to make us Jesus’ strong disciples, to achieve great things for the Lord. I suggest that we all study the book: *Simple church: returning to God’s process for making disciples,* by Thom S. Rainer & Eric Gaiger.

*Bulletin May 10, 2015*

Do we really care about bringing younger families to Christ? Our call to follow Jesus will not have meaning unless being a witness to him. We meet again to plan a next generation ministry on Saturday the 23rd from 9 am until lunch (lunch is provided). This is open to anyone who has heart to invite others to Christ and open our church to unchurched people. Please let the office know if you want to be part of the group working toward this blessed ministry. (this was repeated on May 17th as well).

*Bulletin June 21, 2015*

We as a church, have been passionately and prayerfully looking to the future to see whether we can reach out to more new families to Christ. Still the ways are not clear before us but thankfully many of our members are faithfully working on it to see where God would lead us. Since we all are praying with one heart for this new ministry, let us trust God to bless our efforts. We will meet this Saturday, June 27th from 9 am to 1 pm to chalk out the plans. Please join the group to see how you can help out with this plan or if you have questions.

*Bulletin July 12, 2015*

Those who want to work for the new ministry of the church are encouraged to participate at the meeting this Saturday (7/18) at 9 am. If you can’t attend please pray for those who are committed to work in reaching out to others for Christ.

*Bulletin March 06, 2016*

How about you leading a child to Christ? The AWANA missionary, Tim Thomas is here with us to let us know how we can be part of leading a child to Christ. After worship he will speak to us in the parlor. Please consider being there to know what God might be calling us to do.

*Bulletin May 29*

Remember that we have come a long way praying, envisioning and longing for ministry of reaching out to children and young families of our community and leading them to faith. That is why God has put us as a church in this place. God wants us to be his light and witnesses to the community.

God is faithful; he is giving us strong signs of hearing our prayers by leading us in a new direction. One of our prayers was to hire a Ministry Coordinator to work with us particularly leading us in evangelizing the community. Now God has blessed us with Ms. Shanna Bude, a well gifted and qualified person for the ministry. She has two master’s degrees from Garrett Evangelical Seminary, Evanston IL: one on Christian education and the other on theological studies. She will be starting to work with us from the 1st of July 2016. Since she is currently living in Evansville WI, she is planning on relocating to South Milwaukee at the beginning of July; any help in finding a good apartment around this place will be well appreciated.

**NEWSLETTER - CHIMES:**

*July & August 2015*

Friends,

*FAQs on the New Ministry Plan*

For the last six months we have been hearing of planning a new ministry at our church. Here are some information on the probable questions regarding this ministry.

**What exactly the purpose of this new ministry?**

Though we are one of the nicest churches in the city, a close knit family engaged in caring, loving and serving ministry, we also face challenges on growing or even sustaining the membership. Some folks from our church, therefore, are intentionally praying & planning programs that could attract younger families to Christ and to the church; this is being done with the support of our church leadership and the Conference.

**Would this new ministry change the existing pattern of worship that we have been having?**

The new ministry of inviting millennials into church would start separately as small groups gathering for prayer and friendship, building relationship, connecting lives to Christ and eventually hoping to turn that into a body of worship on regular basis, probably as a second service. It would not replace the present worship service at all; instead, this becomes our church’s new ministry to unchurched people.

**Who will finance this new project?**

Remembering how our ancestors have invested sacrificially for making this church available for us for our spiritual edification, nurture & growth, it should be our obligation to similarly invest on bringing unchurched families of our city and neighborhood to Christ. Realizing our financial constraints, the Conference has stepped up to help out with meeting major expenses that would occur while starting new worship service (including hiring worship leader and so on). Conference assured us that it would support this ministry for three years with the hope that the new group of worshippers would take responsibility of continuing the ministry by being part of the church administration.

**Why can’t the unchurched people be invited to the existing church service instead of starting a new ministry?**

Absolutely we can do so; and are we not doing so always? But unfortunately, people don’t want to come to church; this includes a few of our own folks including the bringing children to Sunday school. Every year we have been losing a few individuals/families from the church roll as well. Knowing this well, a new attempt is prayerfully being tried with a implementing new strategy with the hope that it would draw younger families to Christ.

**Would this new ministry be run separately & managed under independent administration?**

Since this plan is being done by our church as our church’s ministry, there would be no question of expecting a separate administration. As this ministry progress eventually (step by step with small groups, programs etc) and the new ministry emerges successfully, we all will greatly rejoice with thankfulness to God for the opportunity that has been given to us to grow this ministry. Although we might worship separately as two services, this new ministry belongs to us and we continue as one church or a church within the church.

I, therefore, invite us to joyously participate in this sacred work of reaching out to the unreached and uphold in prayers our church group that has been diligently working on this difficult task. Remember, this is our mission to the unreached and let us humble ourselves before God and pray that God’s Spirit might powerfully work in this effort by bringing many people to Christ.

“And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:14-15)

Harsha

*Chimes October 2015*

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As part of an attempt to add more energy into creating a new ministry of leading younger generation to a life of faith, the church has planned to appoint an Outreach Coordinator (part-time) from January 2016. Please pray that we might get an experienced person to work in this area. Although this involves a considerable amount of investment financially, the church administration feels that is worthwhile in view of visioning both the future of the church and also our call to spread the love of Christ to others and make disciples of Christ. The extra income generated through the new daycare has been a blessing and will be useful for this good purpose.

*Chimes January 2016*

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Our plan of a new ministry of reaching out to young families seems to take longer time than we presumed; we need to let God lead us according to his plan and timeline. We have been envisioning this ministry during the last year and now we are in the process of hiring a ministry coordinator (part-time) who is skilled in leading us into a different possibility in ministry. Let us pray that we may soon find the right person to work with us. This ministry would help us to carry out Jesus’ great commission to his followers to fish for people and to make disciples; let us joyfully be part of this new venture of leading others to Christ.

*Chimes May & June 2016*

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Let us not forget that we, as church, have an important role to play in leading both the children and their parents of our community to Christ. In order to enable such possibility, our church has been considering of adopting AWANA program which is expected to be a most effective tool in growing children in the word of God and to bringing them to a deeper relationship with Jesus. Even their parents are encouraged to join in studying the Word and gather to worship while their children are engaged in AWANA.