

Student Ministry at TCBC: Open Meeting April 20, 2008: Summary

On Sun, April 20 an open meeting was held to discuss college & university student ministry at TCBC. People in attendance and who turned in responses in absentia represented students and grad students at TCBC, recent grads, out-of-town students, FAST (Feed A Student TCBC) Team, Executive Board, English Ministry Committee, various fellowship groups in all 3 languages, Missions Dept, Deacons, Pastors, and general congregants of TCBC.

The purpose of the church-wide open meeting was to coordinate ourselves as a church to best support and integrate our students during this unique time in their lives, as well as helping during the post-grad transition. It is obvious that student ministries are one of our church's callings for many reasons (proximity to various colleges and universities; language and cultural support; demographics of our own congregant families); however, being a Chinese church, we also have the complicated and challenging "opportunity" of sorting this out for multiple language groups. Student ministry may be a predominantly English initiative (FAST is officially accountable to EMC- English Ministry Committee); however, it is far from an English-only student body that comes to TCBC, and main support for FAST has come from all 3 congregations.

Meeting goals were to help FAST better plan and coordinate with other student-related areas of ministry; and to ID student ministry goals/gaps. This meeting did not attempt to solve all problems or have solutions to all issues. But having issues identified is a good first step.

Significant points from the meeting include the following:

1. Recognition that per Deacon Board Chair, Deacon Anthony Hui, unfortunately, TCBC does not yet have a vision statement or statement regarding ministry focuses and priorities as a church. Although per above, there is a general acceptance that student ministry at TCBC is a calling of our church. (NB: If you are interested in helping form our church's ministry priorities/goals statement, please contact Deacon Anthony directly.)

2. Overall student ministry goals:

- That students would adopt TCBC as their church home. That TCBC would adopt students during their time with us, no matter how brief.
- That all students would have their faith affirmed and developed.
- That students be in spiritually accountable relationships.
- That students have the opportunity to discover, affirm and exercise their spiritual gifts and calling.
- That students have Christian counsel available, if desired/required.
- That graduating students will be able to find a church home.

3. Student Ministry wish list:

- mentors from TCBC (UT CCF request)
- information, including service opportunities- but in very defined roles, including calling/interests, time commitments, training, accountability, support, terms of involvement; ministry fair; seeing TCBC's needs is also part of adopting TCBC as their church home
- opportunities to meet others at TCBC- FAST lunches good as large student venue, but smaller student venues and church-wide venues are not readily available; Chinese lessons; cooking lessons; Park Day
- Access: Transportation to church (pick ups at various locations at specific times); use of church during week (last schoolyear a UT CCF cell group was grateful for being able to meet at TCBC- room with a piano); use of rooms during exams to study; weekday drop in
- Trained and ready crisis counselors

4. Obstacles/things to work on at TCBC to enhance support of students:

- lack of centralized information channel (church-wide we don't know what is going on, what accomplishments or needs are at any given time)
- lack of system to identify, disciple and train potential mentors to students
- lack of system to disciple and train students
- lack of system to integrate students into accountable spiritual relationships and service opportunities
- method of soliciting help from congregants needs to be less mandated, more voluntary, and based on individual calling/interests and with clear expectations, accountability, training, time commitments, etc.; well-defined, short-term commitments are more likely to interest students.

5. Future action points:

FAST: Since FAST seems to be the clearing house for information both from “church” and students, the FAST program will seek to also be a better distributor of information with students. Starting with a early summer email on ways to stay connected, supports, cell groups, as well as opportunities to serve at TCBC (with defined parameters). No FAST lunches during summer; however, many fellowship groups seem interested in hosting student-friendly gatherings. Coordinate with Pastor Tanya special time during the summer for future Frosh. Try to follow up with all the grads (26 of them this year!) re: getting settled into a church home as a post-grad. FAST lunches to change to 3rd Sunday for next schoolyear per request of Exec Board Chair (since no other meetings on 3rd Sunday, then perhaps more Exec Board people can also participate with the students during the lunches. FAST lunches to go “greener”- change to real plates and cutlery. May not change to real cups yet- due to washing time and space limits. Since lunch not until 3rd Sunday, perhaps to have a sidewalk social on 1st or 2nd Sunday in September as well. Contact Alicia Chin if you are interested/feel called to a ministry of hospitality.

Mentorship: Rev Nolan / Simon Pan to start identifying people for training as mentors to students. Contact Rev Nolan if you feel this is an area of personal calling.

For entire summary of the Student Ministry at TCBC meeting: see FAST info on English Ministry info board (hallway behind main sanctuary on way to little chapel) or online.