

# THE VINEVILLE PAGE

Helping us all grasp the big picture of where we are and what our challenges are as we face the future.



## Ministry to Children and Youth

Issue # 13

Vineville is a congregation that values all its people. Our Senior Adults are filled with stories of life and faith. They have wisdom, grace, and generosity that keeps our congregation centered on the essentials. Our median age members are workers, students, teachers, and givers. They are among the first to give their time and gifts. They always remind us of the needs of others. Our young adults are the beginnings of a great family. They have tripled in size over the past seven years. They have filled our halls with the laughter of children and many of them have arisen to give counsel on how we may strengthen our ministry to families.

Throughout the strategic planning process, one constant refrain has been the need to strengthen our ministry to youth and children. Significant progress has been made in those areas. Now with a new Minister to Students with responsibility also for children, we will be able to finish creating ministries and structures that help our families convey faith to their children. Here is a snapshot of where we are with children's ministry:

Our goal is not explosive growth, but health

- We have a *Weekday Preschool* that focuses on making learning an enjoyable experience. We believe that encouraging imagination and creativity is the best way to prepare a child for the future. A love of learning will motivate a child to better appreciate all the information he or she will be exposed to in the future. Our preschool focuses on friendships, learning activities, manners, working together, along with basic letter and word recognition. Our Preschool Director is looking into the possibility of us working toward becoming a

NAEYC (*National Association for the Education of Young Children*) accredited school. If we accomplish that in the coming years, we would be the only accredited school in this area.

- Our rotational model for Children's Bible Study is a "cutting-edge," innovative, and effective way of communicating the Scriptures. It combines drama, music, computers, kitchen/science, and art. Our Preschool Bible Study is staffed with some of our most creative leaders.
- We have hired two part-time staffers to help with children's issues. Judy George is responsible for all paid staff, be it childcare or our "Mothers' Morning Out" program. Linda Shurley is responsible for coordinating volunteer help during our Sunday morning worship services.
- We have a Children's Team which often works with our Recreation Committee to plan events which are enjoyable and educational for our children. They also examine issues which affect the quality of our work with children.
- We have a Preschool Committee which stays on top of issues affecting both our Weekday Preschool and our church ministries to preschoolers.
- We have a fully graded choir program beginning at age three. This program helps a child learn to sing, read music, and play basic instruments while incorporating basic spiritual truths. Music is the language of the soul. A parent who gives a child that gift opens a child to a richer, fuller world.
- We also have a strong missions emphasis for children. Our Missions Friends ministry (ages 3-5) gives preschoolers exposure to other cultures and peoples by using a variety of experiences. Our children are taught the importance of knowing Jesus and sharing that message with others.

- We have changed the focus of our grade-school missions program from RA's and GA's to *Kingdom Kids*. This was an important change to many of the parents of our children. While still retaining an important missions component, it also addresses basic issues of discipleship and faith development. It was noted that a number of children who attended from our community needed more basics in the stories of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. This program is a diverse, enjoyable program which meets many needs.
- We have significant events through the year which bring the family together [Easter Egg Hunts, Spring Festival, and our Fall Festival are primary examples].
- We have sponsored children's retreats and many activities which are planned simply for enjoyment.

What we need from parents is for them to plug in fully to the many ministries available and to become committed supporters in Bible Study, Worship, children's ministries and wider leadership in the church.

In terms of our Youth Ministry, we have a strong, committed core on which to build. They are small enough to build healthy relationships but large enough to do many interesting and transforming things (e.g., Bible Study, Summer week-long events, white water rafting, ski retreat, mission projects).

With Josh Thompson coming on as our Minister to Students, we anticipate building an even healthier and stronger youth program. ***Our goal is not explosive growth, but health.*** While we welcome growth, we want it to be the kind of growth that creates youth with strong commitments to following Christ. Our long-term strategy has been to regrow our youth through our children. As our many children grow into middle and high school, they will bring with them an understanding of what Vineville stands for: Christian behavior, personal and spiritual growth, Biblical understanding, compassionate ministry, and missional focus.

That is the dream and promise of Vineville.

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## VINEVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

2591 Vineville Avenue  
Macon Georgia 31204

478-743-9366