

ECUMENICAL MINISTRY

The 'Why': The Church has always understood itself as a body with many parts; God equips each part with special gifts and tasks so our diversity will make us stronger together than we could ever be on our own. Churches should endeavour to combine their efforts for ministry in order to enjoy the full benefit of our diverse gifts. Ecumenical ministry has the further benefit of demonstrating to the world that we have one Lord, one faith and one baptism. This is particularly relevant to children and youth, who neither understand nor value the conflicts between Christian denominations.

The Practice:

- Churches combine together for their child and youth ministries. This may be an ongoing (ie. weekly youth group) or an occasional (ie. annual youth retreat) partnership.
- Ecumenical ministries will overlap with other types of child/youth ministry: such as an Ecumenical Family-Based Ministry, or Ecumenical Group-Based Ministry.
- Churches will deliberately seek to learn more about each others' differences and similarities, and the essential role of Christian diversity throughout history. This can be accomplished through workshops, studies, combined worship services, and events.

Helpful Hints:

- Manage your expectations. The strength of Ecumenical ministry is that it introduces children/youth to the diverse spectrum of Christianity and allows them to discern their place in the spectrum. It is not reasonable to expect that every child/youth who encounters your ecumenical ministry will choose to become a member of your parish.
- Maintain a balance. When one church does more work than the other, or receives greater benefit, the partnership can be threatened by jealousy and resentment.
- Practice Christian conflict management. Paul's letters to the Corinthians gives us timeless advice on how to place love above disagreement. There will be issues on which churches differ in practice and opinion; commit to learning, teaching, and acting in a way that demonstrates mutual love and respect. The ability to 'agree to disagree' is a powerful witness to children and youth.

The Plan for Our Parish:

What Churches are in our community?

What type of child/youth ministry do these churches practice?

What ministries do we already share with these churches?

If we combined our efforts with one or more of these churches, what would do together?

What process will we undertake to learn from each other and appreciate our diversity?

How will we handle conflicts?
