

Designing Kids' Ministry Facilities that Promote Growth



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Churches often want their kids' ministry environments to be first and foremost safe/secure, but also uniquely exciting and inspiring venues for kids while learning and playing. Pastors and teachers then use these creative canvases or settings as tools or backdrops to enhance the lesson and activity. Today, the question for architects and designers is: "Post-COVID-19, how will design change? What will the future kid's ministry spaces look like? Will they continue to foster growth and inspire new families to join?" We believe the answer is yes, but we must adapt.

- **Safety.** COVID-19 has given way to an unprecedented season for the country, so the church, now more than ever, must put safety and proactive public health preparedness as its first priority. This would include everything from social distancing within the environment, to more room in each activity area or designing for fewer children per room. Hand-washing sinks and sanitizing stations will need to be designed into every room. Materials used in the facility will need to be smooth and easy to wipe down. Hands-free devices will be a must. Three-dimensional theming elements will need to be hard-coated for easy cleanability. Carpeting likely will be replaced with hard surfaces with soft floor mats that can be washed easily.

- **Security.** Lighting, cameras, protection of each area, and how a church responds to a security threat are topics designers and architects would discuss in the programming phase, especially focusing on risk assessment and evaluating vulnerabilities. Families want to know that there are specific plans set up in case of an emergency. From the parking lot to the entryways, and from the classrooms to the corridors, all scenarios should be anticipated. This includes the kind of access from public areas into the kids' suites, the number of doors in and out of the suite, whether they are locked, and the visibility into each area. Special attention to lighting will need to be addressed inside and outside of the environment.

"The two most critical elements that families are looking for in a kids' ministry space are safety/security and visual excellence. When these two elements are achieved, families feel a sense of peace and excitement in allowing the church to play a part of their family's story."

Derrick Skelton, Kids' Pastor
First Baptist Church of Orlando, Florida

- **Technology.** Staff will work with the design team to incorporate the technology needed to enhance security and safety.

Technology from the kids' perspective: Children re-



Simple changes like paint or a washable vinyl wall mural can transform a drab environment into a thriving, relevant and contemporary activity center.

main accustomed to visually stimulating learning experiences. They are also accustomed to change and easily can get bored with too much of the same thing. The church must respond and adapt to this by having the ability to change things easily, with minimal cost. Consider the use of media technology to create varied and unique atmospheres at the touch of a button. Think about streaming videos, interactive gaming, lighting sets and dynamic programming. These capabilities allow pastors the opportunity to create settings that keep the kids engaged and inspired while learning. Incorporating music and visual stimulation, with simple changes over time, will keep things feeling new.

- **Building atmosphere.** Colors, lighting, fun visuals and unique design elements enhance the ambiance and are critical for a successful student and kids' ministry. Simple changes like paint or a washable vinyl wall mural can transform a drab environment into a thriving, relevant and contemporary activity center. Some pastors have chosen more creative design touches such as dedicated theaters, specialized lighting, or 3D elements. Adding a café with more open-area lounge seating, study spaces and dining opportunities lends itself to multipurpose use as well as the ability to connect the entire family. With some simple and creative enhancements like these (while incorporating social distancing), and anticipation of future needs, the church will be able to nurture children and reinvigorate the lives of the older generations.

"Upon completion of our children's theater, we experienced momentum and an excitement that led to physical growth and spiritual growth. The enhanced environment led to a more dynamic learning environment."

Allen Bonnell, Senior Pastor
Immanuel Baptist Church, Corbin, Kentucky



Church leaders are well-advised to make visible investments in the children's and community spaces of their buildings.

- **Use of multipurpose spaces.** Designing the building for multiple uses allows for expansion of other church activities during typical church times or after hours. Things like a painting class, a support group, an exercise class or another workshop could be incorporated easily and would bring more families to the church. Designing a space that functions for Sunday school, day care or yoga classes, depending on the day and time, fosters a well-rounded church activity plan, which will impact the church and community in a positive way.

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of an existing space, the opportunities are there to create life changing venues. When pastors have these types of spaces, they can affect the lives of the kids, their families and friends, and future generations. \\

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