



Exciting things are happening at PHUMC. It has been a tradition of our church to retain 5th graders in children's ministry. But, as of June 1, 2022, Pulaski Heights Youth Ministry will be welcoming 5th graders into MidYouth, and 8th graders into youth. This will mean that MidYouth programming will be made exclusively for 5th-7th graders, and youth programming on Sundays will be exclusively for 8th-12th graders.

Beginning in 2012, Pam Lentz, PHUMC Minister to Children and Families, Ellen Rowland, PHUMC Minister to Youth and Families and myself were all involved in a pilot program developed around research and experience that 5th through 7th graders are more mentally, socially, and physically aligned than 6th – 8th grade. This makes a huge difference in spiritual development as well, and we have an enormous amount of data now that suggests spiritual formation is more effective when we cater to a child's level of development. This is more than theoretical knowledge for the family ministries team, it actually works. Overall, we saw less bullying, more friendships made across grade levels, and found that the retention of each child was better than our previous experience trying to accommodate a 6th-8th grade model.

Currently, our PHUMC MidYouth Ministry includes 6th – 8th grades and we feel we are not hitting the target group. We acknowledge that 5th graders are sometimes bored by their experience in kids ministry (they feel too old!). We also acknowledge that 8th graders are developmentally ready to start having the deeper conversations that take place on Sunday night youth. So, beginning this summer, 5th grade will become a part of PHUMC MidYouth Ministry and 8th graders will move up to PHUMC Youth Ministry. Yes, we know 5th graders are not in middle school, but after seeing and watching the success of this new paradigm, we believe your 5th grader is ready to move out of children's ministry and into a more age-appropriate learning experience.

So, what changes? As 5th graders in the MidYouth Ministry, they will begin specific pre-Confirmation classes on Sunday mornings and have the opportunity to attend MidYouth youth group on Wednesday evenings. There will also be mission opportunities and retreats for them throughout the year as well. Their pre-confirmation experience will include their very own Sunday School class where they review and build upon everything they have learned in children's ministry to prepare them for their confirmation experience.

We are thrilled to make this change and feel passionately that it will bless the children of PHUMC. We know from experience this system works and are so excited to see it in action. If you have questions about this please do not hesitate to email phumc@phumc.com or call us at (501) 664-3600.

Peace and Grace,

Rod Hocott, Director of PHUMC MidYouth Ministry
Ellen Rowland, Minister to Youth and Families
Pam, Lentz, Minister to Children and Families