

Observing And Caring For The Needs of The CM

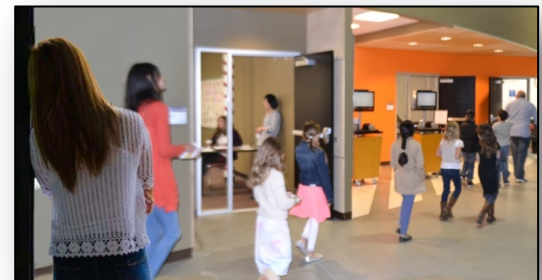
Steve Alley

When the Lord leads you to a new ministry, do what those who serve in “intercultural ministry” (missions) have been doing for years; you need to observe the culture, discern God’s leading for that culture, then adjust your ministry efforts accordingly.



We, in the Body of Christ, are all called to bring the Gospel to everyone! The “Great Commission” is something that applies to us all, no matter where God calls us to minister. Even though our **message** is consistent, our **methods** change according to the specific needs of those to whom we minister.

When you enter a new children’s ministry (CM), be very sensitive to the needs of those to whom you will minister. Jesus taught us, through His example, to minister directly to the “known” needs of the people, and then minister to the “unknown” needs. A hungry person needs food before you can talk to him about his need for a relationship with God. So, ask God to help you see, sense, and understand the needs of the church or community. He will give you discernment.



To help you exercise your ability to observe potential needs, here are some typical observations that you may make, with some possible needs that may be related to those observations.

Observation	Possible Need	“Solution”
1. The pastor makes comments about the “youth ministry,” but never about the children.	1. The pastor may need to be “taught” the value of the CM.	1. Communicate with the pastor regularly. Tell him what God is doing in the CM!
2. There are a large number (proportionally) of children in the adult service.	2. Parents are unhappy with the children’s ministry or are new and unsure.	2. “Advertise” the CM in the main service. Share testimonies and good stories.
3. There are few children (proportionally) in the adult service.	3. The CM is strong, or parents in the area are unaware of the CM.	3. Keep doing what you’re doing! Advertise the CM in the community.
4. There are no announcements in the church bulletin regarding the CM.	4. The CM may not have a good reputation or “image” in the church, or nothing is happening.	4. Work hard to get CM announcements in the bulletin. Share good stories not just needs!
5. The announcements in the church bulletin regarding the CM use terms like “babysitting” and “childcare.”	5. The view or perception of CM needs to include “ministry.” Children need to be valued.	5. Work hard to influence the church to stop using “babysitting” or “childcare.” Use “ministry” instead.
6. There are no signs on the church campus indicating where the CM is located.	6. The CM isn’t viewed as important. The leader isn’t parent-focused. The image needs improving.	6. Install inspirational CM signs with images of happy children.

7. The church facility shows signs of needing repair (carpet, paint, landscape, etc.)	7. The need for more money, or an increase in the value of the appearance of the facility.	7. If there is no more money available, clean up what you have and make it as appealing as possible.
8. As you walk around the CM area, you notice that it is possible for you to walk right into a classroom without being “checked.”	8. Security for the CM area, and restrictions on access by adults is low. Supervision, and monitoring is needed.	8. Install a CM security process that includes clearing those who serve in the CM, restricting access to the CM.
9. There is no “check-in” or “check-out” system for the children’s ministry.	9. Security and protection of the children. An effective check-in and check-out system.	9. Build a check-in and check-out process that provides safety for the children.
10. The church is located in a multi-cultural community but is populated by mostly white people.	10. Make the other cultures feel welcome or valued.	10. Ask God to bring multi-cultural people to serve in the CM, make sure other cultures are welcome in the CM and advertise the CM in the community using multi-cultural images.
11. The church is located in an “urban setting” but the cars in the parking lot reflect a different income bracket.	11. Those within the local community need to feel welcome, and not “different.”	11. Make sure to include greeters, parking volunteers and CM team members who reflect the community.
12. The church is made up of primarily elderly people (55 and older).	12. The current programs may not be attractive to children, youth, or parents with children or youth.	12. “Freshen” the CM to reflect a younger “feel.” Advertise the CM to the community.
13. There are bars on the windows of the homes or apartments in the church community.	13. Security, crime reduction. There may need to be support for parents, children, and youth to assist them in knowing how to live in a violent culture. Restriction of evening programs.	13. Do all you can to make the CM feel and look safe. Increase the security personnel in the hallways and outside the buildings.
14. As you walk, or drive around the church community, you notice the lack of people outside, or children playing.	14. There may be a need for more social encounters (programs, block parties, etc.) at which people can meet together.	14. Create more family events for the community. Include games, good food, and good music. “Block parties” are a good idea!
15. The community around the church is made up of apartments only.	15. There may be a need for interaction, programs, etc. at which people can meet, etc.	15. Hold CM or family activities at the apartment complexes. Advertise the church and the CM.