Ministering To The "Old Saints" On The CM Team
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     In every ministry team, there are those who have been serving on the children's ministry (CM) for many years. I call them the "Old Saints." These wonderful people have the wisdom from years of ministry, along with the possibility of being hesitant to change.

     When it comes to safety policies, the "Old Saints" may need to be "courted" to encourage them submit to the new standards. Remember that they served when the world wasn't so dangerous. The concept of "background checks" or a screening process was unheard of. Because of this, they may feel like the new "tighter" safety policies are not necessary. The "Old Saints" are critically important, while also being easily offended. Here are my free thoughts for dealing with the "Old Saints" in the CM:

1. **Screening existing "Old Saints"** - If you "force" them to be fingerprinted, you will probably lose them. At a certain age, these loyal, faithful people will decide that something is "too much" for them. They will prepare to teach, arrive on time, and invest their energies each week; but, being fingerprinted may be "too much." You might offer them an alternative screening process involving their driver's license or social security number. There are background checks available using only these two sources of identification. You and your senior pastor will have to decide if, and when, to offer this alternative process. Is it offered "automatically" to CM team members of a certain age? Is it only offered when the CM team member, of a certain age, rebels at being fingerprinted?

2. **Screening new "Old Saints"** - Your screening process and requirements shouldn't be compromised for new "Old Saint" CM applicants. This prevents you from getting into a never-ending cycle of "...you let her in without being fingerprinted, why don't you let me in as well?"

3. **Team wear** - I've lost some amazing, dedicated "Old Saints" due to my requiring that they wear the CM team wear. If you choose to require all CM team members to wear some sort of team wear (shirts, aprons, etc.), that will probably be received well by most people; but you may face some strong resistance from the existing "Old Saint" members. If this is the case, you have to ask yourself if the team wear is more important than the person. You might want to design alternative team wear options for those who dislike team wear you require. You might offer vests, button shirts, etc. These would be the same color, with the same logo on them, but they might be more comfortable. If your team wear is T-shirts, make sure you order larger T-shirts than what is "normal" for each person. It has been my experience that nobody enjoys a tight-fitting T-shirt; but, they will deal with a larger T-shirt by tying it in a knot or tucking it in.

4. **Cater to, and "court" the "Old Saints"** - The "Old Saints" will provide powerful stability in your CM team. I've seen the sad results of the "trend" of using the "young" and discounting the "old." The "young" bring new energy, and they "look" better to new visitors; but, if the "Old Saints" feel discounted or pressured, they will leave! When they leave, they talk to their friends, and soon the CM has a bad reputation for "getting rid of" the "Old Saints." I would suggest that the "Old Saints" be catered to, valued, and "courted" because of the wisdom and stability they offer.

     Bless you as you wade through "the valley of the shadow of safety."