

Preschool Task Force Report to the Session
September 2003

CHARGE

The Preschool Task Force, appointed by the Session in March 2003, was asked to review My Morning Out (MMO) and University Presbyterian Preschool and Kindergarten (UPPK). "Particular emphasis of the review" was "to include the relationship of the programs to the mission of UPC, the financial and administrative relationship with UPC and the childcare needs of the community."

BACKGROUND

The Task Force began by reviewing the history of both programs and their original purposes. UPPK was established in 1972 to provide a half day kindergarten experience for five year old children at a time when public kindergarten did not exist in North Carolina. The church was to act as a sponsor of the program; the program would attempt to be self sufficient; enrollment would be open to the entire community with UPC members receiving priority and a Session appointed committee would be responsible for the business of the program. MMO was started in September, 1977 as a baby sitting cooperative for children ages nine months to five years old under the auspices of the Presbyterian Missions Committee which provided the church nursery room rent free.

In an effort to gather current information on both programs the Task Force conducted a needs assessment of UPC families who had children eight years old and younger concerning weekday preschool programming. The Task Force decided to survey only church members, not other parents in the community who had sent their children to the preschools. One hundred and ten surveys were mailed on April 24, 2003. Seventy one of those surveys were returned. The Task Force tallied the results and analyzed and evaluated all of the written comments and suggestions on the surveys. (See attached summary and results.)

After distributing the preliminary survey results to the directors and teachers of the two programs, the Task Force interviewed both Directors, requesting and receiving the following information from both programs:

1. The projected enrollment for the 2003-2004 school year and number of students on any waiting lists.
2. Number of UPC families who will be participating in the program in 2003-2004.
3. The budget for 2003-2004 and all other financial information (i.e. savings and liabilities).
4. Scholarship policies and scholarship application forms along with information on current scholarship students.
5. Parent surveys for the 2002-2003 school year.

The Task Force also invited the teachers from both programs to present in writing any thoughts, concerns, evaluations or dreams for the programs. Five UPPK teachers responded to that request.

RESULTS

As a result of all of the information gathered the Task Force has come to the following conclusions.

1. The original purposes of both programs no longer apply. Public kindergarten is well established and respected in this community. Although MMO remains a cooperative program it has become a preschool and is no longer a babysitting service.
2. Confusion exists about the relationship of the two programs with each other and their relationship to the church. Despite being located in the church building, the two preschool programs are not involved with church programming.
3. Parents expressed concern about the lack of connection between the two programs. The two separate programs do not allow children enrolled in one program to have priority enrollment in the other program. The programs have different hours of operation resulting in different drop off and pick up times, different school calendars, and a duplication in resources, supplies and personnel.
4. Personnel for both programs are not currently employed by the church; however both programs use our financial office for payroll services and use our non-profit tax ID number. The budgets are administered by their boards with Session oversight.

RECCOMENDATIONS

It is the strong feeling of the Task Force that it is the responsibility and mission of University Presbyterian Church to support families in their efforts to provide their children with early childhood experiences that take place in an atmosphere conducive to meeting children's needs for wholesome mental, emotional and spiritual development.

A need for fulltime childcare was indicated on 42% of our survey replies. However we do not recommend that the Session switch from a half day preschool to a full time childcare center because of the prohibitive cost of renovations. The Long Range Planning Task Force had a church-wide space utilization study done by John Ramsay of Ramsay GMK in 2002. As part of this study Mr. Ramsay was asked to consider the possibility of converting the space currently used by the preschool programs from part time use to full time use as an all day childcare center. He found that at the very least the main church kitchen would require a complete renovation and expansion and the house at 212 E. Rosemary St. would need to be removed to make the space needed to provide for an adequate playground for a licensed all day childcare center. Along with paying off the mortgage and removal of the building we would be obligated to get permission, through what we should anticipate would be a lengthy process, from the Town of Chapel Hill to tear down a structure in the Historic District.

We do feel a half day preschool remains relevant to many of UPC's own members and provides an expression of pastoral care and nurture. We also assume that a family's participation in a church preschool program invites a further commitment to the church. Along with this service to UPC members, a half day preschool continues to be greatly needed in this community, especially when it is one that is church based and is an inclusive ministry without regard for religious belief, gender, class, race or national origin. We also believe that the church should no longer sponsor a private kindergarten.

Therefore, we recommend that the Session disband the two current programs and establish one preschool program, serving children ages 2 - 4, with one director, renaming the program University Presbyterian Preschool (UPPS).

Program establishment:

University Presbyterian Preschool (UPPS) would be under the direction of the Session, through CYM, with the director and teachers as employees of UPC. Once a director for the new program is hired, the directors and the task force would have discretion in making final program decisions and working out program details.

Class offerings:

We envision the following possible class offerings serving a total of 84 children:

2 classes of Two Year Olds held two days /week, (24 children)

2 classes of Three Year Olds held three days/week, (28 children)

2 classes of Four Year Olds (Pre Kindergarten) held four or five days /week, (32 children)

The current programs are serving 32 One Year Olds one or two days per week, 33 Two Year Olds one or two days per week in MMO (65 children total) and 26 Three Year Olds two days per week, 24 Four Year Olds three days per week , and 18 Kindergarteners five days per week in UPPK (68 children total).

This proposed new program will allow for an increased number of days for ages three and four as requested by parents in the survey. The elimination of the one year old classes and private kindergarten will allow for more children in the three and four age bracket than are currently enrolled. UPC members will have priority enrollment and once in the program will be guaranteed a place in the next age appropriate class. There is a possibility that we may fill a majority of the spaces with children of church members.

We envision that with the change of space use and uniform classroom times and schedules, the church will have the opportunity to provide family and parental education and spiritual nurturing opportunities such as Presbyterian Women circle, parenting classes and support groups. We will also consider the possibility of developing a babysitting cooperative for children under the age of two and the possibility of eventually adding afternoon programming.

Finance and Administration:

The church would continue to support the preschool by providing classroom space, use of other church facilities, custodial service, paper products and all utilities. The new program would continue to support a portion of the custodial costs. Tuition and supply fees will support teacher salaries, supplies and administrative expenses. Once a director is hired, a budget for the 2004-2005 school year will be developed by the director with the help of the Task Force. As a reference point the UPPK budget for 2003-2004 is \$132,000 and for MMO budget is \$78,000.

In addition to the annual budget money, UPPK has approximately \$28,000 in Certificates of Deposit and MMO has \$25,000 in money market funds and investments. A portion of those savings might be used to pay the UPPS director's salary during program development time. The director and all teachers would be hired as part time educational employees and would not be enrolled in the Board of Pensions.

We envision in this new model a renewed cooperation between weekday programming and Sunday programming. The programs, both UPPS and Church School, would covenant with CYM and UPC staff to care for the space and to share resources and supplies.

Timeline:

If the Session approves these recommendations, we envision this new program beginning in the academic year of 2004-2005. We recommend an open search for a Director of UPPS. The current directors and teachers would be most welcome and encouraged to apply for the director position and teaching positions in the new program. We would ask that the Session also retain the current Preschool Task Force, asking them to hire the new director by November 2003, in preparation for registration in January 2004 for the 2004-2005 school year. The Task Force would also be asked to work with the director, teachers and CYM throughout the transition.

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Attachment:

Survey Results – UPC Preschool Needs Assessment – Not Included

This report was approved by Session September 11, 2003

At the October 9, 2003 session meeting the Session approved the following motion which amends the proposal.

"After hearing the concerns of the staff and parents, the Preschool Task Force recommends that the Session authorize the Task Force to allow for the following modification to the Preschool Task Force Plan. We will proceed with the plan to establish University Presbyterian Preschool (UPPS) for children ages 2-4, but we may offer a small kindergarten class for the next two years. This kindergarten would be available only to children who are currently enrolled in UPPK with priority given to church members. The Task Force has always felt these bridge years might be needed."