

Dear NextGen Parents & Family,

When the decision was made amongst the staff to move towards a family service for Sunday mornings, I knew I wanted to make sure I was intentional in continuing to build relationship and make space for discipleship of your students. A few months ago, the Lord gave me a fresh perspective to what the growth and discipleship of your students could look like. Thus came the birth of what I am now calling "NextGen Night."

The details of this vision go as follows; Every Tuesday night from 6:30-8:00pm your 3rd-12th grade aged students will gather in my home for food, games, a time of teaching, and discussion. Based on the topic they are learning, we may break out into smaller groups based on age and/or gender to better suit discussion and growth amongst the students. At this point, you may be thinking "This sounds a lot like youth group, so why would you add younger students and have it in your home?" Well, I love that you thought to ask such an important question.

It is my belief, we should always be looking for opportunities to help kids learn to transition well into the next phase of life. Kids aged 8-11 (3rd-5th grade) are in their pre-teen era of their life. In my personal and professional experience, it can be some of the most tumultuous and unsteady years of a child's life. They are learning to identify and work through big emotions and changes in their brains and bodies. I can't think of a better time in a child's life to be more present, pointing them to the truth of who Jesus is and who Jesus says they are. Being proactive in this looks like starting earlier than most of the discipleship experiences we had, to provide a chance for lasting success. I also see a beautiful picture of all age groups represented, sharing their experiences and stories with one another.

The other piece of the question is why in my home? I don't know about you, but home is my favorite place to be, it is the space that brings me the most comfort and sense of peace. I want to channel that feeling and make the space for the students to feel the same way. I see gathering in a home as a way to immediately bring a sense of comfort and familiarity to the students. I also believe that inviting a friend to your home is much easier than inviting a friend to church. I want to see this ministry grow and I will continue to be creative in the avenues I take to make it happen. As we grow, we will address the special needs that may arise, but for now, the Heath Home is open for ministry.

Lastly, I want to make you aware of one of the most integral parts of this whole plan, and that is the leaders. So, I introduce you to my NextGen team. I, Pastor Elizabeth, will continue to be the head of NextGen. My husband and co-host of the Heath Home, Tim Heath, will lead as the Events Coordinator for all things NextGen related. This includes camps, outings, outreach, and fundraisers. Josh Farrance, Student Mentorship leader, will continue to lead the area of ministry that he pioneered for your 6th-12th grade students. Joy Farrance, Curriculum Coordinator, will plan and organize teaching topics, and resources that are needed. This is a tiny snapshot into each of our roles, but the whole team is committed to serving you and your students. I love this team because I know each of us has a passion and desire to see your students begin, grow deeper, share with others, and continue their relationship with Jesus Christ all their days.

Your partner in raising devoted followers of Jesus,  
Pastor Elizabeth Heath