



How to Start a Christian Emphasis Committee at your branch

Putting Christian Principles into practice through programs that build spirit, mind and body for all.

Pray

Any spiritual movement that will have spiritual impact will be grounded in prayer. Seek God to the direction he is leading you and what your motives are for starting a YMCA Christian Emphasis Committee.

Your Role

Your role will vary based on whether you are a YMCA staff member, a YMCA volunteer or you have a position in another Christian organization that is trying to help the YMCA in the area of mission. If you are a staff member, you may start by speaking to other staff members and some key volunteers whom you may feel would have an interest. If you are a volunteer or a member of another Christian organization, you may meet with a couple of friends first and find out if they would be interested in helping you start the Committee. Then you could also seek out a key staff contact.

You do not have to be a YMCA member to advocate or help with the Christian mission. However, since members can have a lot of influence in setting YMCA direction, it would be good to have some people in the core that are actually members or volunteers.

Know the Cultural Environment of your YMCA Branch or System

The national YMCA Mission statement is “To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build spirit, mind, and body for all.” Most of the branches in the USA use this mission statement and do not create their own. If you can find this mission displayed somewhere at your branch or on literature, you have a great place to start the dialogue.

It is possible that you will not see this mission displayed, but you might find one of the secondary marketing slogans like “We build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities.” In these cases, you may have to ask a little further, if a branch has a mission committee or a staff person that has a role in working with the YMCA mission.

You might be able to call on the phone or ask at the desk if there is anyone on staff who has looked into Bible study programs or worked with churches in the community in partnership with the YMCA.

Find a staff advocate

The key to all of this is to find a staff advocate – someone on the staff who God has prepared to really embrace working together in lifting up the “C” in the YMCA. You may be the staff advocate. Or you may be the volunteer or member that is trying to find out who the key staff person may be.

This key staff person may be a full-time staff person, who wears one or many hats at the branch or it could even be a part-time staff person that works a few hours a week on a certain program area. When looking for a staff advocate, do not forget to ask about part-time employees who may have an interest in this area.

Pray – The George Williams Initiative

The YMCA was birthed when George Williams, 21, and two of his friends felt God led them to a strategy of praying by name for the other 150 members of their drapery firm in London. As he said in his diary; “it had a remarkable effect”. Soon a handful and then dozens of others began to inquire about spiritual things, commit their lives to Christ, and want to be plugged into a Bible Study.

I would encourage you and the staff advocate to begin to pray for each YMCA staff person by name and that God would sensitize your heart to the right approach to advocate for a Christian Emphasis Committee.

Know the best way to communicate the Mission in your environment

Once the staff advocate is found, you quickly begin to understand how to best approach developing the Christian Mission at your branch. A key to your success will be your willingness take the position of a servant to see the branch succeed at its goals while advocating for the YMCA mission. Too frequently, Christians are known for what they are against, not what they are for. One way to run the process into a ditch quick is to choose the wrong starting place. For sure “*ditch-runners*” are starting with things like – dress in classes – what music is played – whether yoga is a religion or not – what other groups meet at the branch and should they be allowed. Steer clear of such things initially.

A better heart attitude is to ask the question; “ how can we help this branch become successful, while beginning, to work on some Christian Mission goals.”

Here are some ways to start the mission dialogue with other YMCA staff or Board Members.

- Talk about what makes a great organization
- Share parts of the Christian Mission Booklet – The meaning of the Y Logo, George Williams Story
- Use the YMCA Mission Powerpoint as a historical perspective on the Mission (see ymcamission.com for a free copy)
- Share some success stories you have heard from other branches and how those successes really made the branch more successful.

Look for 4 -7 others to join the Committee.

No matter what our enthusiasm is, we can never hope to have long term success if we are working alone. Like a log taken off the fire, our flame is easily blown out, or smolders. As a part of praying and vision casting, you need to be asking... asking other people that God lays on your heart or brings your way to be a part of what you are doing at the YMCA.

The Goals and Objectives of a Branch Christian Emphasis Committee (CEC)

As you think about the role that your committee might play, here are some goals and objectives to consider as you get ready to sit down and get started.

The objective of the Christian Emphasis Committee is to help the branch implement the Christian Mission by:

- Developing and creating programs and initiatives that bring forth the Christian Mission

- Providing signage, scripture verses and other resources in the facility
- Integrating the Character Development initiative and the Christian Mission together
- Incorporating the Christian Mission into existing Y programs
- Helping staff integrate the Christian mission in their responsibility areas
- Helping develop leaders with character to serve more broadly within the YMCA
- Partnering with churches and Christian organizations for greater impact
- Participating in City- Wide Christian emphasis events with other branch CEC committees

Talk about practical ways to get started

As you begin to meet, you need to decide in what ways do you think you can best get started. There are three categories that most ideas fall into at this stage: displays; events; small groups. Here are some ideas (explained in more detail later) that many branches have used to get started. They have sought to choose 1 or 2 things from each category and make it a core competency – that is something that is consistent and done well.

- *Building Displays*
 - *Scripture Bowl*
 - *Scripture Displays*
 - *Character Development signage*
 - *Prayer Request Box*
- *Events*
 - *Prayer Breakfast*
 - *Easter Sunrise Service*
 - *National Day of Prayer Event*
 - *Thanksgiving Event*
 - *Christmas Event*
- *Small Groups*
 - *Journey to Freedom Group*
 - *Felt Need Seminars – relationships, finance, leadership, parenting etc.*
 - *Bible Study*
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