

Colorado Family Church: Elders Group Supports Young Families and Pastors

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Couples enjoying the night out together

In 2021, a group of elder members of the Colorado Family Church began weekly zoom meetings to discuss ways in which we could support our young pastors, Michael and Adonia Hentrich. We explored our options and interviewed the pastors and others about what was needed. We invited Andrew Love to one of our meetings and he helped us understand one of the big obstacles to family well-being: parents weren't getting out enough without the kids to bond and get refreshed and revived as couples. The solution was simple and obvious: they needed babysitting, especially those who don't have local grandparents. So we went to work organizing a Group Date and Babysitting plan for those parents. Andrew chose a fun place for couples to have a meal and play some games. We elders organized four hours of babysitting on a Saturday night for their kids of all ages.

We created a consent form for parents to fill in and sign, planned a meal and snacks, made a list of the children's gender, ages and parents, and created groups and activities according to age. On a Saturday in October, seven older adults gathered at the church at 4 p.m. to welcome the parents and fifteen children, ages 8 months - 15 years old.

The parents dropped off snacks and diaper bags, giving instructions for the younger ones, and left gleefully to enjoy a meal, fellowship, and fun without the kids. Freedom! Marjorie Buessing, who had many experiences as a camp director on the East Coast, addressed the group and explained some rules and the purpose of the gathering.

"Do you know why we are all here at the church tonight? It's so your mommies and daddies can go out on a date together. Spending fun time is important for their love to grow. You each came from your parents' love and their love for each other is the foundation of your family. So dating is important for healthy families. Tonight, we want to have lots of fun together, take care of each other, be safe and create heaven right here."

Adults got busy with the activities, each having an assigned group. We were fortunate to have one younger adult, Kristian, who oversaw the Nerf gun play area. Jim Chimes happily supervised the double feature movie theater crowd and the rest of us guided indoor playground activities and games. Halfway through the evening, everyone gathered in the Dining Room to savor Mrs. Hentrich's sumptuous homemade pizza. Playtime resumed and went on until 8 p.m. when parents returned to pick up their very satisfied children!

Here's what one nine year old girl said about her experience: "It was really fun. I liked how there were different options for all age groups like board games, Nerf gun fights, you could do what you wanted. And, I liked playing with everybody."

What was dating night like for the moms and dads? Andrew Love's observations: "It was so nice to see a big group of parents, who are normally so domesticated, out in the wild among the hip downtown folks of Denver. I got to see how these people are undisturbed by children or responsibility. I saw a lot of laughing and bonding, which was really nice to observe."



Poppy Richie and other community elders providing quality childcare

A parent with three children shared this: "Our date night was an awesome experience for both my husband and me and my children. Going out has become very hard logistically and financially and as a result, couples-time gets put on the back burner. This was our first time out without kids since my baby was born last December and it was so fun to finally spend time as a couple with other couples. My kids also got dedicated 'grandparent' time with the uncles and aunts who watched them. I can't say enough about how grateful I am for their willingness to organize this!"

Jerry Tamayo, the quintessential "grandmother/auntie" for many of our younger alumni of the Blessed Teens Academy, shared her experience: "I enjoyed talking with Richard Buessing and with Kristian, getting to know them better, learning about their families, which was very good for me. Marjorie seemed to be the one doing the most babysitting, holding onto the 8-month-old for hours. The rest of the kids pretty much had fun together playing games, watching movies, and playing with Nerf guns. It was a pretty laid back evening and I'm glad the couples could go out and enjoy themselves."

Was this a success? Our impression was unequivocal yes! What did it accomplish? It was a win/win event because three generations received benefit and together we strengthened intergenerational heart connections within our community. The substitute "grandparents" connected with the kids and their families, the younger parents enjoyed a time out from work and childcare to have quality time together as couples, and the youngest generation saw their moms and dads enjoy special time on a date. This group of young parents is already planning the next event! Hopefully it will become a happy tradition and continue to grow here in the Colorado Family Church.