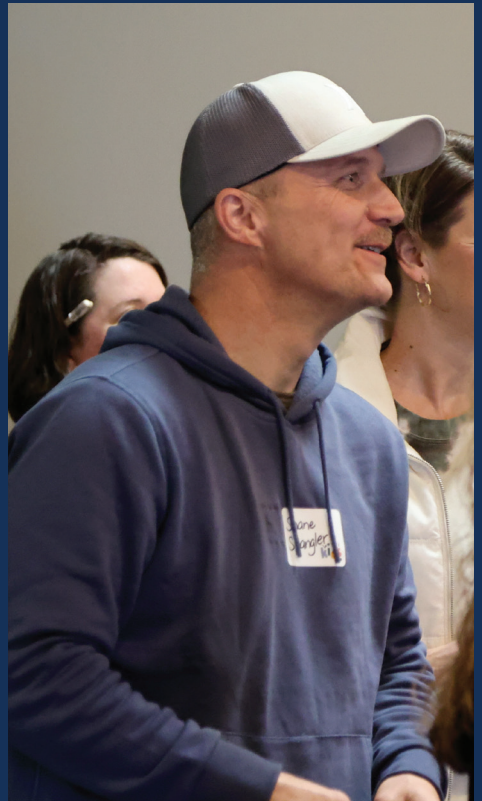




sbcv.org/kids



men Stepping Up



Men meeting together to hold one another accountable and share ideas and thoughts from their respective ministries."

Gathering on a weekday afternoon for hot drinks at a coffee shop is a common occurrence today. But, what is uncommon is a group of male, kid ministry leaders meeting together to hold one another accountable and share ideas and thoughts from their respective ministries.

The percentage of men serving in children's ministry has always been lower than women, but men can make such an impact on a child's life—especially the boys. They need a godly man to look up to and emulate. The formative years in a child's life occur between the ages of four and 14. Both boys and girls need the Gospel truth poured into them during these years. Men have a unique perspective and enhance the discipling of children.

From a coffee shop in Colonial Heights, a group of men meet regularly to check on each other and talk about what God is doing in their children's ministries. On any given afternoon they represent five or more SBCV churches and strengthen and encourage one another.

"With us all serving in a pastoral role and in a field that is mostly women, we enjoy meeting together as men to just talk pastoral ministry. We enjoy being together and learning from one another," commented Garrett Oppel, children's pastor at **Mount Pleasant Baptist Church**.

"The men in our group have kept me motivated and excited about children's ministry. It'd be easy to get lonely as a guy in children's ministry," said Dustin Johnson at **Parkway Baptist Church**.

Networking together has created joint children's ministry outreach events.

"I love how we're working together and not looking at other churches as the competition," said Oppel.

This group is about encouraging and strengthening one another. Luke Long with **Swift Creek Baptist Church** mentioned, "I get fantastic insight into how our ministries can be improved and such a personal encouragement as I have men in my life who can empathize and speak wisdom into my life that I know is always centered on God's Word!"

Jake Barnett, children's pastor at **Bethel Baptist Church** agreed. "Meeting has been a huge encouragement in both my faith and the ministry God has entrusted to me. We encourage and build up one another. Five different churches are represented when we get coffee, but our mission is the same, to see children turn from their sin and call upon Jesus as their Lord and Savior."

Men and women both have a role in children's ministry. Together, children receive the transformational discipleship that will lead them to possibly teach the next generation.

Eric Heatherly, children's pastor, at **The Heights Baptist Church**, stated the core of why they meet. "It's a great blessing to talk with men who love the Lord and have a desire to see His Kingdom advance in the Commonwealth and beyond. I see that each of these men recognizes that it won't be long before the children we currently serve will be leading the Church". ■