

MADE FOR MORE

East Main Presbyterian Church • 2026–2027 Ministry Year

Mission

East Main Youth Ministry exists to create and equip disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our Theme of the Year: Made for More

This year, East Main Youth will focus on a single theme that speaks directly to what our students and families need most right now (pressure points): understanding our identity, belonging, and purpose. That theme is Made for More, and it will have two foundational scriptures:

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” — Ephesians 2:10

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” — 1 Peter 2:9

Why This Theme

Made for More will not be a slogan we chose to sound catchy on a t-shirt. It is a conviction we want every student at East Main to carry with them long after they graduate from our ministry. Underneath the theme are three things we believe God wants to form in our students this year:

- Identity and self-worth — helping students understand who they are because of whose they are, not because of performance, appearance, or approval, as many of us do not know who we are; we only know what we do. I am a student or a teacher, but what happens when you can no longer do it anymore?
- Belonging — building a community where every student knows they have a place, are known, are wanted, and appreciated- “You belong here!”
- Purpose — helping students discover the sense of purpose God has intrinsically placed in their lives, and what it looks like to live that out.

At the center of all three is a single truth we want every student to walk away believing: they are made for more because they are God’s beloved, and they are called to live as God’s beloved. Identity comes first. Everything else, self-worth, belonging, purpose, and calling, grows out of that starting place.

Vision: This year, we aim to provide opportunities and relationships that reflect our mission. So, we are renaming a few of the vision’s pillars to better reflect the posture we want to instill in our students, moving from a list of activities to a rhythm of discipleship. These include encouraging students to:

GATHERING	Attend a church service
GROWING	Attend a small group Bible study
GIVING	Participate in yearly service opportunities
GOING	Invite other students to large group events and small group Bible study

Expectations

Biblical Literacy/hermeneutics

Students should be able to name the 66 books of the Bible and provide a very general summary and/or genre for each book. But also have a clear understanding of how to interpret the Bible.

Prayer

Students should have an active personal prayer life, as well as the comfort of praying for or with others.

Gospel Dictation

Students should be able to give a 1- to 3-minute summary of what the Gospel is or what it means to them.

Service

Students should be active participants in the service opportunities, reflecting Christ's life of service to others.

Large Group

Purpose

Large Groups are our outreach and fellowship events. About once a month, students participate in large theme nights that provide a fun space to get to know each other and an opportunity for new students to get a taste of the East Main environment. Students are encouraged to invite friends to these events. These events are usually split for middle and high school students, though occasionally they will join together for a combined Large Group.

Summary

While each event is different, generally students arrive at the designated time and place (often 3–5 PM for MS, 6–8:30 PM for HS @ East Main Church) and sign in at the front table. Volunteers and fellow students greet students and are free to meet and mingle before the activity begins. Each activity usually lasts an hour and a half, with snacks and drinks in between.

Examples

Some examples of yearly Large Groups are:

- Grog — students search for missing flashlight pieces throughout the church as they run from and evade the monstrous Grog monster.
- Catacombs — students reenact the early church followers by searching for Scripture verses in the catacombs of the church while hiding from the police.
- Super Bowl Party — a night for games, good food, and fellowship.

Small Group

Purpose

Small Groups are our faith-growing and relationship-building curriculum. During the school year, students meet weekly to study Scripture and discuss the essentials of the Christian faith. Often, these gatherings begin with a “catch-up” period for students to share details about their week and to pray for each other, strengthening friendships and enabling encouragement. This also includes our Sunday School program, which meets from 10–11 am in Cornerstone during the school year.

Meeting Schedule, 2026–2027

Weekly small groups will meet every Tuesday and Wednesday evening, September 2026 through May 2027. Monthly large-group events meet on Sunday evenings and will be scheduled on the calendar.

Summary

Most small groups follow a similar structure and are designed to include time for students to greet and talk about their weeks, play together and form bonds, and read Scripture and discuss the topic. A typical schedule looks like:

- 6:30–7:00 — Meet & Greet and Updates
- 7:00–7:40 — Games & Activities
- 7:40–7:45 — Snacks and prep for lesson
- 7:45–8:00 — Lesson
- 8:00–8:35 — Break into small group discussions
- 8:35–8:45 — Pray & Conclude

Opening the Year: Identity & Self-Worth

We are opening the fall with a unit on identity and self-worth. In both our student and parent surveys, this came back as the top-priority topic for our ministry to address, and it is the natural front door to everything our “Made for More” theme is about. Before students can live out belonging or purpose, we want them rooted first in who they are in Christ.

Purity Unit (February)

Our purity unit is placed in February. We are considering using those weeks as lock-in nights, with guys and ladies meeting separately for focused, age-appropriate conversation.

We are exploring the possibility of inviting a married couple from our church (potentially the Fowlers and Jacksons) to speak into this unit and offer a lived, healthy example of what purity and covenant relationship look like.

Lock-In Nights (What purpose?)

The overnight lock-in nights at the church are part of our small group rhythm. These nights give us extended, unhurried time for two conversations that are hard to have in a normal 90-minute meeting:

- Purity — held separately for guys and ladies, walking through what it means to honor God and one another with our bodies, relationships, and hearts.
- Biblical career and vocation — exploring what it means for a student to carry out God’s mission through whatever career they choose, and how to glorify God and live a fulfilled life through their work, whatever that work turns out to be.

Both nights will be shaped around the same core conviction behind our whole theme this year: students are made for more; they are God’s beloved; and that identity should shape every choice before them, including who they date and what they do with their lives.

Curriculum (Lessons)

Our youth curriculum will focus on topics related to our theme, as voted on by students and parents.

Topics

Identity and self-worth, the top priority topics for both students and parents, open the year. Purity is placed in February with a possibility that may use those days as lock-in nights- guys and ladies separate. They will study bible interpretation methods as well.

Update by Frank, Sept ‘26

Service

Living a life that reflects Christ is living a life of service to others. Not only does serving provide for and care for others and show an example of God's love, but it also shapes and changes the one who serves, building them in character, love, and friendship with fellow believers. You are never too young to serve! And for that reason, we have several small and large opportunities throughout the year for students to serve at East Main Church:

Fall: Church Has Left The Building (CHLTB)

Students are invited to join with over 200 volunteers to work on projects hosted by East Main Church. These work projects are typically household requests from members of the greater Grove City community. They are carried out by a group of East Main leaders and volunteers, usually on a Sunday in November. These projects often include raking leaves, cleaning or weeding yards, painting, hauling trash, etc., and East Main Youth have been an integral part of that workforce for years!

Spring: Freedom Fast

Freedom Fast is an opportunity to refresh and re-center yourself on God's heart for justice. This is a great way to engage your church, small group, family, or friends in the active, challenging discipline of fasting and prayer. Before the fast, each participant is encouraged to gather donations from friends, family, the local community, and the church to help bring freedom and justice to people who are oppressed and exploited. The event ends with leaders and students breaking the fast together over a large meal, reflecting on our experience, and praying for an end to slavery worldwide and to injustice in their communities.

Summer: Mission Trip

Mission Trips are once-a-year events typically occurring in the summer. This often week-long trip will have students visit a community in need to serve and learn what it means to live with a missional mindset. HS Students have traditionally attended the Urban Promise summer camps in Wilmington, DE, to help the Urban Promise staff play with, care for, and share the Gospel with elementary students in the area. MS Students do more local work, such as weeding and gardening at the Mercer Quality of Life Center, working at the Equestrian Center in Slippery Rock, or serving a local church in Erie.

Year-Round

Often, there will be smaller opportunities to serve, such as painting a room, moving furniture around, or helping with a Sunday Service. These opportunities, though smaller in nature, are just as vital to the life of the church and students.

Leaders

Our leaders are volunteers who have been equipped with both the desire and gifts to work with and encourage students on their walk with Christ. These leaders come in a variety of forms, from college students and young adults to parents and even retirees! All volunteers working with students have the following:

- A love for Christ that drives them to share that love
- A Gospel love for students that takes time each week to listen to, play with, and guide students to a better relationship with Jesus
- PA Child Abuse History Clearance
- PA State Police Criminal Record Check Clearance
- Completed Mandatory Reporter Agreement Forms

Expectations for Students

Children's Ministries and Youth Ministries are about relationships: relationships between students and Jesus, students and leaders, and students with students. We foster these relationships by intentionally creating space in our weekly programming for learning, reflection, play, prayer, fun, and service. We want our ministry to be a positive experience of Christian community that reveals and reflects the love of God made known to us in Jesus for everyone who participates.

Critical to our ability to build relationships and a positive community is an atmosphere of, and the practice of, RESPECT. Because every person has been made in the image of God, each person is worthy of respect. Respect builds up individuals and a community and creates the foundation for safe and effective learning experiences.

Therefore, our one overarching rule for all participants in our ministry is RESPECT for each other and for property.

Students Show RESPECT By:

- Respecting church property
- Refraining from unkind or inappropriate words
- Following a leader's instructions the first time they are spoken
- Listening, not talking, when others are speaking

Because disrespect tears people down, fragments the community, and destroys property, it will be dealt with immediately and directly.

For Any Disrespectful Student, the Following Steps Will Be Taken:

- 1. The student will receive up to three verbal reminders to be respectful. In each situation, the disrespectful behavior will be named, and a specific request on how to be respectful going forward will be made by a Youth Ministry Leader (Youth Director, Adult Volunteer, Pastor).
- 2. If, after three reminders, the student remains disrespectful, the student will need to leave the activity or event for 15 minutes. This time will be used for a conversation between the student and a leader to understand why the behavior continues and to determine ways to be respectful going forward. The importance of respect for others will be discussed. After 15 minutes, the student will be allowed to return to the activity if they agree to be respectful.
- 3. If the student is disrespectful a fourth time, the student will not be permitted to participate in the remaining group activities. The Youth Director and an Adult Leader will speak with them after the youth event, and a meeting with the student and parent(s) will be set for sometime during the week following the incident.
- 4. During the meeting with the student and parent(s), a plan to address disrespectful behavior and identify ways to practice respect will be developed. Consequences for repeated disrespect will be identified together.
- 5. If this cycle repeats, a second meeting with the parent(s) will be requested. Consequences may include a period of suspension from participation with the group and/or special activities and events.
- 6. Disrespectful behavior in accordance with the course of action outlined above will be addressed at the discretion of the Youth Pastor, in consultation with other members of the church's Pastoral Leadership, and may include a period of suspension.

We hope we won't need to use this policy to address disrespectful behavior. We anticipate and expect the BEST from our students. However, if disrespect begins to impede our ability to minister to the students in our group, this policy will guide our course of action.

Family Weekend Retreat/Seminar Proposal (Friday- Saturday)

What's the parents' role in discipling their students? The stronger predictor of a student's success is the relationship they watch or live in every day. They learn what love, conflict, communication, and forgiveness look like. Their parents' relationships live within them, and that's powerful. But how do we cultivate healthy relationships within families so that discipleship can flourish?

So, during a chosen weekend, we will be creating something unique: an entire night set apart for parents and students to simply be present with one another, away from the noise of schedules, screens, and the daily rush that so often crowds out real conversation. We hope that this retreat will become a space of vulnerability, where honest questions can be asked, and honest answers can be given without fear of judgment. Scripture reminds us in Proverbs that "as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another," and we believe that kind of sharpening happens best in relationships that are okay with vulnerability, especially the relationship between a parent and a child; parents have more impact on their children than anyone else. If there are unresolved hurts, misunderstandings, or distance that has crept in during a busy season of life, this weekend is designed to open the door to healing gently, not by forcing resolution but by creating the space in which trust can begin to grow again.

The heart of the retreat/seminar will be a guided one-on-one time between each parent and their student, during which students are invited to open up (with guiding questions) about whatever is on their heart. In contrast, parents are asked simply to listen, to understand, and to hold back the instinct to correct or judge. I believe vulnerability is one of the deepest ways human beings bond with one another, and that a family that can be honest together becomes a family that can trust one another more fully. Alongside these individual conversations, we will also gather in small groups so that families can hear from one another and realize they are not alone in their struggles or their joys. Our prayer is that every student will leave this retreat feeling more truly known by their parents, and that every parent leaves with a renewed sense of connection to the young person growing up right in front of them.

Year at a Glance

Weekly Wednesday Meetings

Every Wednesday from September 2026 through May 2027 is listed below with its type and focus.

Date	Type	Focus
Wednesday, September 9, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Made in God's Image
Wednesday, September 16, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Belovedness Before Performance
Wednesday, September 23, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Comparison, Social Media, and the Self
Wednesday, September 30, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Identity in Community, Not Isolation
Wednesday, October 7, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Why and How We Read Scripture
Wednesday, October 14, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Wisdom for Everyday Decisions
Wednesday, October 21, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Living Out What We Learn
Wednesday, October 28, 2026	Buffer Week	Serve Night / Fall Fun Night
Wednesday, November 4, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Why We Believe What We Believe
Wednesday, November 11, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Doubt Is Not the Opposite of Faith
Wednesday, November 18, 2026	Weekly Lesson	Making Ethical Decisions as a Christian (Dealing with Moral Ambiguity)
Wednesday, November 25, 2026	No Meeting	Thanksgiving Break
Wednesday, December 2, 2026	Buffer Week	Christmas Giving Project
Wednesday, December 9, 2026	Weekly Special	God With Us

Update by Frank, Sept '26

Date	Type	Focus
Wednesday, December 16, 2026	Buffer Week	Christmas Music and Cocoa Night
Wednesday, December 23, 2026	No Meeting	Christmas Break
Wednesday, December 30, 2026	No Meeting	Christmas Break
Wednesday, January 6, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Made for Community
Wednesday, January 13, 2027	Weekly Lesson	When You Feel Like an Outsider
Wednesday, January 20, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Peer Pressure and Courageous Faith
Wednesday, January 27, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Being a Friend Worth Having
Wednesday, February 3, 2027	Weekly Lesson	God's Design for Relationships
Wednesday, February 10, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Purity as Mutual Honor, Not a Female Burden
Wednesday, February 17, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Guarding Your Heart in a Digital World
Wednesday, February 24, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Emotional Purity and Boundaries in Dating
Wednesday, March 3, 2027	Buffer Week	Midyear Check In and Prayer Night
Wednesday, March 10, 2027	Buffer Week	Service Project Work Night
Wednesday, March 17, 2027	Buffer Week	Open Q and A Night (Parking Lot Night)
Wednesday, March 24, 2027	Weekly Special	The Road to the Cross
Wednesday, March 31, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Anxious for Nothing? Honest Faith and Hard Feelings
Wednesday, April 7, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Practices That Steady the Soul

Date	Type	Focus
Wednesday, April 14, 2027	Weekly Lesson	When to Seek Help
Wednesday, April 21, 2027	Weekly Lesson	How Believers Engage a Divided World
Wednesday, April 28, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Called and Gifted: Faith, Work, and Your Future
Wednesday, May 5, 2027	Weekly Lesson	Sent Out: Living Your Faith This Summer
Wednesday, May 12, 2027	Buffer Week	Senior Celebration and Testimony Night
Wednesday, May 19, 2027	Buffer Week	Open Week / Leader Discretion
Wednesday, May 26, 2027	Buffer Week	Memorial Day Week

Monthly Large Group Sundays

Date	Event
Sunday, September 13, 2026	Kickoff Sunday
Sunday, October 18, 2026	Fall Fellowship Night (Halloween theme)
Sunday, November 8, 2026	CHLTB (Church Has Left the Building)
Sunday, December 20, 2026	White Elephant Christmas Party
Sunday, January 17, 2027	Catacombs
Sunday, February 14, 2027	Superbowl Party
Sunday, March 14, 2027	Spring Large Group Event
Sunday, April 11, 2027	Spring Large Group Event
Sunday, May 16, 2027	End of School Year Event

