



cam

**Adopt a College Student
Parent/Life Group Leader
Handbook v1.0**

Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Letter from Mike | 3 |
| Meeting Your Student | 4 |
| Advice for Meetings | 5 |
| Tricky Issues | 6 |
| FAQs | 6 |
| Resources | 9 |
| Contact | 10 |
| Copy of Student Email | 11 |

Why are we doing this?

a letter from Mike

As a church, we don't just want our students to be followers of Jesus. We also want them to understand the value and role of Jesus' body, the church. We want them to graduate as Christ followers who are catalysts for action and change in whatever church they end up in. There are a lot of ways that we aim to communicate this value to students: loving and serving them twice a year at Study Day, giving them practical teaching, and through robust community in our CAM ministry and Life Groups. Still, graduating college, and figuring out what following Jesus looks like post-school is difficult for students.

When I graduated college, I had a hard time translating the way I had lived my faith out in college to the "real world." I no longer had ministries that were catered directly to my season of life, or mountains of food to fill me up at the end of each semester. During this time of transition, I found myself reflecting on relationships I had over the past ten years with older Christ followers. *I need to work forty hours and still find time to get in the Bible. How did Scott do that? My wife and I need community to engage with. What does that look like for Kirk and Steph?* By the nature of simply pursuing me and being in relationship with me, Christ followers made an enormous impact on my ability to navigate transition, and ultimately, engage with the church as an adult. Relationships give vision for what a changed life can look like.

That's our hope. Not that you'll have incredible zen wisdom to dispense every month, but that you would come alongside your student through what they're going through, and let your student simply come into your life. Having them over for dinner, letting them hang around your place on a Sunday, and letting them feel like a part of your life can not only help them feel more grounded and cared for as a person in the present, it will provide vision for them in the future.

Mike Hughes

Director of College Ministry

Meeting your student

Where to start?

As the “adopting parents”, we want you to contact your student directly from the start (and you’ll likely be the one reaching out in the future as well). We recommend calling or Facebooking your student as the initial contact. Feel free to email or text them if you’d like. Before contacting your student, have some kind of meeting in mind that would work well with your family. Rather than adding more to your schedule, we’ve found that students love get together where they’re invited into your everyday, normal life, such as having dinner or going to church together (see below for more ideas). Make sure that you check with them to see if they have a car. From there you can decide together how often you want to meet. We recommend getting together with your student at least once a month and contacting them a couple more times each month through email, text, call, or Facebook. If you have room in your schedules, getting together more could be beneficial to the relationship.

Expectations

We tell the students that this program is a chance to get off campus to do their laundry somewhere that doesn't take quarters, and to get to know someone further along in life (you!). This leaves the door open for you, your family and your “adoptee” to define what you would like the relationship to look like. It’s likely that students have different expectations than you, so it's good to talk this through with your family and then bring this up with your student early on in the relationship. Figure out what they would think it looks like to be “adopted” by your family. *Do they simply want to do laundry at your place? How often do they want to get together? Would they like you to be their mentor? How long do they think they’d like to be “adopted”? How busy are they?*

Suggestions for Meetings

The best meetups are the ones that let students into your life, rather than ones that are tacked on to your schedule. Here's some examples of what previous families have done.

- Have them over on a Saturday and Sunday just to hang out with no agenda
- Invite them over to eat with your family (college students love free food!)
- Doing yard work? Gardening? Bring'em over!
- Find out if there's any mutual interests. Then meet them for a run, take them to your favorite record store, or teach them how to knit.
- Go to church with them
- Have them babysit (!) When you get home, hang out with them for a while

Tricky Issues

Depending on your age and exposure to millennial (ages 18-31) culture, you might be surprised with some of the things that your students surface that are a part of their everyday lives. Our students come from a hugely diverse set of backgrounds and belief systems. *Your job is not to change your student(s), or to convince them they're wrong about something. Those jobs belong to the Holy Spirit. Your job is to do life with your students, be there for them, and show them the love and truth of Jesus.*

FAQs

What if I can't get a hold of my student?

If you've exhausted all your options (email, call, text, and Facebook), please call Blackhawk at 608.828.4200 or email cam@blackhawkchurch.org. We will do our best to connect you with your student and get a hold of them from our end.

How often should we meet with our student?

We recommend getting together with your student at least once a month and contacting them a couple more times each month through email, text, call, or Facebook. If your schedules allow, meeting more frequently could be beneficial to the relationship.

When I sign up, how long do I commit to meeting with my student?

When you sign up to "adopt" a student, you commit to meeting with them for a semester (generally August to December or January to May, depending on when you are matched). Often, relationships continue the entire academic year and even until the student graduates. If the

relationship seems to be going well, we encourage you to continue meeting with your student as long as they are in the Madison area.

Who contacts who first?

You should reach out to your student first, as they do not get your contact information (and probably most of the times after that)

My student and I aren't clicking. What do I do?

Give it some time, and try to plan a couple of meetings where you get to do something together (like going for a walk, or taking your kids to the park) rather than just sitting around and trying to make conversation work. Ultimately, if things are still feeling awkward after a semester, get in touch with us, and we can talk things through at that point.

My student seems reluctant to open up. What do I do?

That's okay, and really normal. Honestly, some of the people who have impacted me the most probably never felt like we had a deep connection, but they were there for me. Don't feel the need to force conversations that are deeper than your student wants to delve into. All relationships require a lot of trust and shared experience. If you spend a couple of semesters just talking about sports or classes, that's okay. Feel free to be honest about things going on in your life, too. If we want our students to trust us enough to be real with us, we need to show that we're willing to do the same.

How honest should I be with them?

As honest as you're comfortable with, and as honest as your relationship allows. Like in any relationship, honesty takes trust. Make sure you're comfortable with each other before going deep.

What the heck do they want from me?

Probably not much. Someone to listen. Maybe a meal here or there. Be their friend.

What does the student think they're signing up for?

We tell the students that this program is a chance to get off campus to do their laundry somewhere that doesn't take quarters, and to get to know someone further along in life. This leaves the door open for you and your family to define what you would like the relationship to look like. Students may have different expectations than you, so it's good to discuss this early on in the relationship.

What's the best way to communicate with my student?

This may depend on your student, however we have found that the two best ways to communicate with most students are text messages and Facebook.

My student is graduating. How do I adopt a new student?

You can adopt a new student by filling out a new form [here](#).

Recommended Reading

Chan, Francis. *Crazy Love*. (book, understanding the Gospel)

Delassandro, Lauren. "[4 Steps to Finding Your Calling](#)." (article, decision making/ post-college life)

Keller, Tim. "[College Ministry Will Change America](#)." (quote, vision for ministry)

Keller, Tim. *King's Cross*. (book, understanding the Gospel)

Knapp, Jackie. "[Why College Ministry Needs the Local Church](#)." (article, vision for ministry)

Lewis, CS. *Mere Christianity*. (book, understanding the Gospel)

Manning, Brendon. *The Ragamuffin Gospel*. (book, understanding the Gospel)

Relevant Magazine's [website](#) is a great resource that deals with issues of faith, culture, and following Jesus. It's geared towards college students.

This list will continue to be updated and added to.

Contact

Questions? Feel free to make suggestions as to what else could be helpful as a resource.

Mike Hughes

Director of College Age Ministry

mhughes@blackhawkchurch.org

608.828.3688

Nicola Porto

Associate Director of College Age Ministry

nporto@blackhawkchurch.org

608.828.4205

Blackhawk Church

9620 Brader Way

Middleton, WI 53562

608.828.4200

home@blackhawkchurch.org

Student Email draft (revised 8.1.13)

Hey.

I'm writing to let you know that you've been "adopted" by a family through our Adopt a College Student Program! You should be getting an email soon from your family to set up your first meeting (please let us know if you don't hear from them).

After your first get together, you'll continue to meet up throughout the semester, about once a month- it might be on campus or at their place, really wherever and whatever you're comfortable with and works best for both of your schedules. You should expect the meetings to be pretty informal. We don't hand out any curriculum or secret agendas to our volunteers. We simply tell them to be good friends and walk through whatever you might be experiencing with you. Obviously, with so many students and volunteers, we can't guarantee that personalities are going to match up perfectly. But trust me, as someone who's met a lot of our volunteers: our volunteers are awesome. Really. Freaking. Awesome.

Honestly, the main place we've run into problems in the past is when students walk into these relationships with a lot of expectations that they never share with anyone. Here's what you should expect: a human who's a few steps ahead of where you're at in life to be honest with you and do life with you.

I sure was glad that I had people like that in my life as a student at UW. After graduation, I had a hard time adapting doing church as an adult. There weren't any more ministries specifically catered to me, and there weren't any Study Days to stuff me with food- I just had to figure out what it looked like to follow Jesus in the church as a "real person." During that transition time, I thought of relationships I had in the past with older Christ followers. They had an enormous impact by simply living life

alongside me and bring involved in the church. Our relationships had a longer lasting impact on me than I ever knew at the time I was a student.

And that's the opportunity we want to give you- to have relationships with other Christ followers further along in life. We *know* it will benefit you in the long-term and let's be honest, short term benefits like free laundry and some meals aren't too bad either.

You'll be hearing from your family soon,

Mike Hughes
Director of College Age Ministry
Blackhawk Church
mhughes@blackhawkchurch.org