



SMBC SCHOOL MINISTRY LAUNCHES 8TH YEAR OF SERVICE AT ST. MATTHEWS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

On August 13, some 60 representatives of the SMBC School Ministry Team gathered in the school cafeteria with the teachers and staff at St. Matthews Elementary School, for a celebratory breakfast on the day before students reported for the 2019-20 school year. The stated purpose of the assembly was to introduce new, and reunite returning, Volunteer Tutors and Classroom Helpers from SMBC, to the teacher in whose classroom they would serve for the coming year. However, the air of excitement, camaraderie, and celebration pervasive in the room made this event feel more like a family reunion instead!

Like every family reunion, the centerpiece of the event was food! There was a scrumptious breakfast buffet, faithfully prepared by Bobbie Whitten, Sara Brinley, Cathy Kayrouz, Carla McCormick, and other members of the SMBC "Feed My Sheep" Food Ministry Team. The meal was delivered and set-up by Bill Nowak, Lisa Nowak, David Garrard, Brian Johnson, Joyce Oliver, Tim Galyon, Pastor Greg, and others. Sissy Lutz provided fresh flowers and decorative table settings. Similar to many family gatherings, the family patriarch, Pastor Greg, gave thanks to God for the food, and asked for God's blessing on the endeavors of SME teachers and students for the year.

Reminiscent of many family reunions, members of the two organizations renewed acquaintance with each other, replete with joyful recognitions, hugs of endearment, jovial handshakes, and appreciative back slaps. Stories about summer vacations and new life events were exchanged. Plans and hopes for the new school year were shared. New Volunteers from SMBC and teachers new to SME were introduced and warmly welcomed into the fold, in the same way that families receive new in-laws who have recently married into the family.



SMBC Classroom Volunteers (wearing distinctive, black, SMBC 'smocks'), enjoy breakfast and camaraderie with the SME teacher they will serve during the coming school year.

However, the most significant similarity between this event, and a family reunion, was the inescapable sense that *those present shared a mutual bond of friendship, of trust, of appreciation, and of LOVE for each other!*

Amidst the outpouring of joy present in the room on that morning, it is stunning to recognize that, until SMBC's School Ministry began at SME, seven years ago, the respective members of these two organizations were STRANGERS to each other!

Had Pastor Greg not approached SME's principal in the summer of 2012 with the question, "*How can our church help your school?*", SMBC members would still be driving past the unfamiliar school building on Brown's Lane, just blocks from the SMBC campus, without a trace of affection. SME staff would still be thinking of SMBC as that mysterious church whose unseen members spend Sunday mornings huddled inside that big building on Grandview Avenue. Those individuals, who rejoiced with each other so warmly at this gathering, would have passed each other at Oxmoor Mall without a hint of recognition.

Instead, the teachers and staff at SME have become a part of the SMBC family, and we are a part of theirs. SMBC has become interwoven into the very fabric of the daily routine and the culture of SME. The staff knows of our love for them and that our service is motivated by our desire to share the love that Jesus has showed to us.

For the 8th year of service, SMBC is actively engaged at SME in fulfilling Jesus's command to, **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** (Mark 12:31 NIV). In keeping with this command, the primary goal of School Ministry at SMBC is to, "demonstrate the love of Jesus to those we encounter at SME". Just as 'love' is at the center of our School Ministry logo, it is also at the center of our service at St. Matthews Elementary School.

Indeed, for our School Ministry to thrive, "All You Need is L♥VE!"