

## Introduction

This edition of Educare focuses on ideas for camps or programmes for TCKs. The first article tells the story of the development of an annual residential camp for TCKs in New Zealand, and the second contains advice and suggestions from a youth pastor who has led many TCK youth programmes. We hope that the experience and wisdom collected here will help anyone who is seeking to develop camps or conference programmes for TCKs.

Gill Bryant

### **An interview with a Korean TCK\* camps - a story from New Zealand**

The material in this article has come from an interview with Joyce Campbell, which took place in March 2024. We are grateful to Joyce for sharing the experience of running TCK camps at Eastwest College, WEC New Zealand.

The first TCK camp took place 9 years ago, as a result of a group of the college staff (from different agencies) feeling that something needed to be done to support TCKs in New Zealand. A lot of TCKs were returning to New Zealand at around the age of 14, and some were 18 plus and heading for higher education. For the older ones, the parents often went back to the field after their son or daughter started at university.

The camp is open to NZ TCKs (from mission families) aged 14 and above, with some attendees in their mid or late 20's. The first camp was for just 2 nights, and 23 TCK MKs attended. The usual size of the camp nowadays is 50-55. The camp was advertised through a network called New Zealand Missions Interlink, which meant that just one member of staff contacted all of the agencies.

After the first two camps, because of popular demand from the campers, the timeframe was extended from two nights to four nights. Because the camp has now been developing for 9 years, in recent years the following 'vision' for camp was penned. The aim is to 'create a community of belonging where Christ is worshipped and the story of our family in missions is valued and honoured'. They also created Facebook and Instagram pages for those who had been to camp, to help them stay connected afterwards.

Campers are encouraged to keep coming back each year. This is different from ReKonnnect in the UK, which is a re-entry camp. During the first camp, they identified leaders from those who attended, and asked them to be involved in leading the second one. This meant that the camps movement was 'owned' by the TCKs themselves, and not just perpetuated by the college staff.

By the sixth or seventh year of camps, the leaders were older and some were getting married. The camp's senior leaders asked them what they wanted from camps in terms of speakers and activities, and now they are responsible for most of the organisation of camp. Some of them are married to non-TCKs, who attend as well, as part of their effort to understand their spouse.

Mission parents are often keen that their MKs attend camp, but some MKs are reluctant to attend if they don't know any of the campers. Once they come, they soon find their 'tribe' and keep coming back year after year. This is a joy to watch.

Nowadays more of them are young adults, with the average age being about 18 years old. It is great to have older ones getting alongside and helping the younger ones. The staff thought about splitting the age groups, but the TCKs didn't want to do that.

Recently the older TCKs have chatted about possibly starting a separate weekend for adult TCKs. This would be something that they themselves organised and would be in addition to attending camp. Already they arrange day meet-ups during the year in different cities in New Zealand.

One great advantage of running events at Eastwest is that accommodation and catering facilities are provided. There is a team of people ready to help with the practicalities.

So, what is included in the camps programme?

Structured activities include outside games known as wide games (see this link for ideas).

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/news/2023/june/9-wide-games-to-get-everyone-up-and-moving/>

There are devotions and worship each morning, and these are mostly now led by the MKs themselves. Some campers have been really surprised at the life and energy of the worship sessions and they have become a real highlight of camp. It has helped that it has always been MKs from the camp that lead. They are talented musicians who lead contemporary worship. It also has a positive effect when participants see young people like themselves taking the lead. They normally have an interactive speaker for 45 minutes and then divide into smaller groups to discuss some questions. When camp first began there was no speaker organised, only devotions, but the MK leaders felt that they really needed some structured Bible teaching. The small discussion groups are led by the older MKs.

They have a story-telling evening around a bonfire – this is usually near the end, when they are more relaxed with each other as they have been together for a few days. They use this opportunity to share their experiences.

Sometimes they have a baking competition (from a TV show called Bake-Off/MasterChef), and they work in teams to produce cakes and other food. To start with, the teams of campers bought the ingredients, but now the leaders buy the ingredients prior to the camp, as it saves on time. They even have a system where they give points to the winners of various games, held before the Bake-Off/MasterChef, and they can then exchange these points for baking ingredients.

They have done chess tournaments, and a game where they worked in teams to build a tuk-tuk (a kind of vehicle common in parts of Asia). The games are now organised by the 'middle' group of MKs (second oldest group).

There is always a theme for the camp. Examples are 'the road less travelled', 'seasons', 'telling our story'.

For the first two days, the programme is very structured and the time is filled with activities. They do it like this because the MKs might not know each other at the start, so they need to 'break the ice' and give them a chance to get to know each other. There is more free time later in the programme, when they are more at ease and happy to hang out together.

They also have time for board games and card games, and campers are encouraged to bring their favourite board games with them. They have a beach day, going in the afternoon and having fish and chips afterwards. (Of course you need to be located near the beach!)

There is always a session on transition for TCKs who have not been before, or have not attended a transitions seminar. If they have done it before, they can come again if they feel that they need it. Joyce normally leads the transition seminar. The person doing this needs to be someone who has experience of transition and a knowledge of MKs.

The older campers, (those who have been back in New Zealand for a while), run a seminar on the New Zealand Education System. They explain to those newly arrived what they will encounter at school, in terms of the way things are done, ideologies and current ideas. They have different groups for high school, university, and a trades group for those who want to train for something practical such as plumbing or carpentry.

Everyone has duties to help with the practical running of things – vacuuming, cleaning bathrooms etc.

They also contribute to the community around them by doing some voluntary service. In New Zealand there are a lot of bush nature reserves, so they can choose to help with a project such as laying a new path. As this is heavy physical work, they can choose something less strenuous such as weeding around the college grounds.

There is a lunch for parents at the end of the camp which they have with the campers on the final day. It has been a great time for parents to connect with each other.

\*Although the term 'TCKs' is used, the group referred to are all MKs. The camps are designed for MKs, not a larger group of TCKs from different backgrounds. The term 'TCKs' is safer to use in some contexts.

## **Conference Programme for Teenage MKs**

Here are some ideas and advice kindly provided by Dan Ovens, an experienced youth pastor who has led 6 programmes for teens at different mission conferences.

### **General comments on teenagers and MKs**

Teenagers have some similar characteristics that are relevant to all of them, not just MKs. Examples are: fear and anxiety; a fight to develop their own character and identity; a longing to give and receive love; a need for a purpose in life, something to be passionate about.

Any volunteers who will be helping to run the conference need to understand that MKs have additional characteristics, if they are coming from outside the world of missions. MKs have specific issues, such as transitions and goodbyes, grief at leaving, separation from parents (boarding school), multicultural awareness, probably additional languages, an awareness of another culture, exposure to poverty, and a more informed worldview. Often they have a sense of duty to their parents and don't want to let them down. They might

identify with their parents' missionary call, but they might not. They will face re-entry to a world outside of the missionary 'bubble' in most cases.

### **Themes for the programme**

Dan asked the parents and they suggested themes such as: living out your faith, prayer, integrity and morality, and the theme of belonging, especially when you feel out of place. He addresses these themes through different books of the Bible. Examples are Job (suffering), Daniel (standing for God in an alien culture), Joseph (processing difficult experiences), Habakkuk (watching and waiting), Psalms, and James.

Teenage MKs often have a lot of Bible knowledge but they have not all made a personal commitment to follow Christ. Dan always gives a Gospel challenge. It is not just theoretical teaching - he makes it personal by asking them where they are at with God. How does the passage that they are reading apply to them? It is good for them to be aware that everyone goes through tough times, both MKs and others.

### **Getting to know the teenagers**

Dan recommends starting with some relaxed activities to get to know the young people. For example, collect some interesting facts about each member of the team who will be working with the MKs. Share the information with the teenagers, one fact at a time, but don't tell them which person it is about. They have to guess. Share these facts one at a time and ask the young people to vote on who they think it is, or go and stand by that person. Afterwards, tell them which people the facts are about.

Ask each team member to share a little bit about themselves – where they are from, likes and dislikes, a bit about their faith journey.

Ask the teenagers if anyone plays a musical instrument or likes to sing. Ask them to organise some worship for the start of your sessions.

### **Timetable**

This depends on the timetable of your conference. Dan usually has two or three sessions each day, about an hour and a half or two hours long. Give some spiritual input – worship, Bible study, discussion etc – in at least one session. Depending on the group, this could be done for a whole session of two hours, or for a short time, followed by games or another activity.

### **Spiritual activities**

He recommends starting with some sung worship, if possible led by the young people. Then give a bit of input from the front, maybe a short Bible talk. After that, have smaller groups to discuss a Bible passage and think about some questions. They may wish to pray in their groups, but don't force it. Try to sense if they are ready for prayer. One way to do this might be to ask each one to pray for the person next to them.

A possible timetable might be:

Warm up activity (ice-breaker or 'get to know you' activity) 10 minutes

Worship, singing 20 minutes

Talk around 20 minutes

Informal group discussion 10 minutes

Group study and questions 20 minutes

Worship or response 10 to 15 minutes

### **Talking points or quizzes**

Make up an activity where they have to decide if a quotation is from the Bible or somewhere else. He does this by using quotes from Disney films, but you could use something else. For example:

*The future can be whatever you want it to be* (from Back to the Future 3)

*Cleanliness is next to godliness* (an old British saying)

### **Team challenges**

Here is an example based on a TV show called The Apprentice (UK). Put the teenagers into teams of 3 or 4, and give them a plain cardboard box (for example, a cereal box turned inside out so that the design is on the inside). Ask them to create a convincing advertisement for a new box of cereal. For example, they can put a design on the box, invent a slogan or a jingle (short piece of music with words – such as *Crackpots Cornflakes are the best – go and put them to the test!*), or act a part showing how the cereal makes you energetic.

**“Bring me” game.** Have them in small teams and ask them to bring items to you at the front. Shout out the name of the item and they race to get it to you. The team that gets there first gets a point. Examples of items: a shoe, a flip flop, a pencil, a watch, a red sock, an earring, anything that is fairly easy for them to find.

### **Wide games**

These are outdoor games that need space. You can see ideas here:

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/activities/?name=wide%20game>

### **Other team games**

Try this link:

<https://www.developgoodhabits.com/team-building-activities-teens/>