



A service of the
Northwest District
of the
Lutheran Church -
Missouri Synod

Youth Supports

A resource to encourage and empower youth
leaders for the expansion of the Lord's kingdom.

December 2002 - Volume 3, Issue 12

- “More” is Not Necessarily “Better”
- Youth Ministry Helps!

“More” is Not Necessarily “Better”

“Why can't we do youth night like First Baptist—they get 200 kids!”

“Let's have a Lock-In every weekend!”

“The Council proposes that the youth do the spring clean up around the church!”

Are you trying to fit it all in, in order to provide an exciting, full program for the youth of your church? Do you feel guilty if all the “boxes” on your youth calendar aren't full? You just might be trying to do too much. It is possible to do valuable youth ministry for and with the teens of your congregation without putting yourself, your youth, and families into a “gotta do it” frenzy.

I have found three little words to be very helpful in youth ministry planning and scheduling: purpose, balance, and “friendliness.” Using these three guides as my “reality check” has helped me feel good about what we put on the youth calendar (and what we choose NOT to put on the calendar).

Purpose – Is there a purpose to the events and activities you would like to plan? Not every activity needs to change the world, but know why you do what you do. Our youth board has come up with several purpose “categories” that they feel are valuable in nurturing our teens. Our categories are: social, educational (spiritual nurture), service to others, worship. There are no correct categories; you, your volunteers, and your youth need to determine categories together, based on what they feel would support young Christian men and women in their faith walk. There is no perfect number of categories either, although I would suggest somewhere between three and five. If you can do your planning through these “purpose filters,” you'll feel less obligated to do something because the church down the street is doing it!

Balance – Are your activities equally balanced between the categories you have selected? Have you provided six social opportunities in the last two months and no service opportunities? Is a canned food drive underway while a worship service is in progress? Make a conscious effort to provide opportunities from several or all categories over the course of several months.

Balance needs to happen not only within the youth ministry program, but as it relates and connects to other ministries of the congregation. Be aware of ministry opportunities that are being provided by other groups in the church. Capitalize on those efforts by advertising them to your youth and encouraging them to attend. Honor those efforts by guarding against “double booking” youth events on top of other church events (sometimes this cannot be avoided, many times it can). Share your youth calendar and plans with other groups in the church (Boards, Council,

You just
might be
doing too
much!

Are your
activities
equally
balanced
between the
categories
you have
selected?

In the
planning and
idea states,
teens want to
do
everything!
But more is
not always
better.

Youth
Ministry
Help!

etc.) so that they can honor your efforts as well—and tell them why you are informing them!

“Friendliness” – Friendliness? What kind of a guideline is that?! Do I always have to be friendly? Even the day after a lock-in? (heaven forbid!) No, by friendliness, I mean ... are the events on your youth calendar not only family friendly, but are they volunteer friendly and youth friendly? Sometimes we put so much on the church youth calendar that the events become a burden! Really. The lives of our teens are so full with so many choices and so many “have to’s,” I don’t know how they sort through it all leave alone get it all done. Youth ministry plans can be made through the family friendly filter, by being informed about and sensitive to other demands on the families of your teens. What’s on the school calendars? When are finals? When are “parent nights”? In the planning and idea stages, teens want to do everything! But more is not always better. Help your teens be more aware of their own (and their family’s) schedules as you set dates. And what about our volunteers? Sometimes they are few and far between; and therefore, oh so valuable! How does the number of youth events put on the calendar honor their lives? How often are we taking them away from their own family events? If you have enough volunteers, “rotate” their participation at events—don’t use all volunteers (and the same) all the time. Give them a break. Help them honor time with their families. Set a limit on the number of events per month, the number of retreats/trips per year, the number of lock-ins in a lifetime (just kidding!). And ... help each other stick to it.

Plan youth ministry with purpose, balance, and “friendliness.” This way, you can graciously turn down events that may cause overload or are outside your categories. This way, the events you plan and implement can be done with joy and energy, confidence and a purpose!

Heidi Frank, Minister of Youth & Contemporary Worship, Living Savior Lutheran Church, Tualatin, Oregon, <mailto:hborg@living-savior.org>

Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

http://www.nowlcms.org/educational_services/NetworkingMinistries/YouthSupports.aspx

The Department of Youth Ministry of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has several Internet resources available to you.

One of the items is a monthly E-Bulletin to “provide current information on youth events, resources, updates, plus various & sundry items of interest to youth workers (and youth) of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.” To subscribe to the Youth Ministry E-Bulletin send this message: SUBSCRIBE E-BULLETIN to MAILSERV@crf.cuis.edu.

To unsubscribe send the message: UNSUBSCRIBE to MAILSERV@crf.cuis.edu.

To find out about Bible studies, song books, and other resources available from the Department of Youth Ministry, check out the DYM Web site: <http://cs.lcms.org/youth>.

Except as noted, all text and photographs are © Northwest District of the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod. All contents, except as noted, may be duplicated for use in local congregations as long as the source is noted. If you have any comments or responses for this publication, please contact Glenn Zander, 2142 NE McDonald Lane, McMinnville, OR 97128 <forgivn@macnet.com>