



A service of the
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Youth Supports

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

February 2003 - Volume 4, Issue 2

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The Quest for Quality

What is outdoor ministry? What is its value to the life of people, congregations, and the larger church? For some, outdoor ministry has been a form of Christian fulfillment; for others, it has been sort of an “extra”, something worked into the yearly youth activities schedule. But what is its true power?

Outdoor ministry leaders and many congregations believe that camp is a necessary and dynamic part of the faith development in children and youth. The experience of camp can and does bear witness to the word of God in powerful and relevant ways. The worth of camping lies in the ability to understand the past, work in the present, and plan for the future in the light of that Word. We, as church leaders, must always be searching, asking questions, and looking toward the future. Our search must be a quest for quality.

Lutheran outdoor ministry is more than a recreational program for boys and girls or a beautifully wooded tract of land used as a “vacation spot” away from the routines of life. Lutheran Outdoor Ministry provides youth with what may be their most effective opportunity, outside the Christian family, for a ministry grounded in our Lord and His Word. Through it Christian principles are not just discussed — they are experienced and realized. The key of outdoor ministry is the small group of campers and counselors who live, work, play, and learn together.

Experiential education has long been recognized a very effective educational process. Concepts like faith, grace, servant hood, sacrifice, peace, and community can be understood and practiced in and after a camper's personal experience. Lutheran Outdoor Ministry as an agency of the Christian church enables youth to experience a closer personal relationship with Jesus as Savior, be lead to more direct attitude and action patterns, and explore more in-depth their own faith life.

*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.
Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and
when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

— Deuteronomy 6:6-7

The Word is the key element of Lutheran Outdoor Ministry. Bible study, prayer, devotions and campfires are considered the formal sharing of the Word. It is, however, the informal sharing of ourselves as little Christs that offers dynamic and effective avenue of proclaiming both Law and Gospel. Lutheran Outdoor Ministry provides the opportunity for an extended and intentional experience and for sharing formally and informally, which are essential ingredients in a quality Christian education experience.

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May 2003
District
Youth
Gathering
at
Seaside,
OR!

The relaxed pace and extended time of the camp experience allows participants to discover, reflect and respond. The Word then can call for a reordering of personal values and responsive living. Lives centered in Jesus Christ reflect the power of the Holy Spirit's work through an individual's encounter with God's Word.

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. — Romans 10:17

The Gospel is able to change hearts. Lutheran Outdoor Ministry can be an experience that can promote the full attention to the Gospel because it provides the integration of the sacred and the secular. In Lutheran Outdoor Ministry, day-to-day and hour-to-hour encounters with people and situations provide Christian leaders countless opportunities to demonstrate an active faith in both formal and informal settings. Christian leaders are presented with the opportunity to become real people. The informal settings found in outdoor ministry make it possible for participants to experience church leaders as whole people who eat, sleep, and play just like them. Trust levels can be greatly increased through the full exposure of the self.

Lutheran Outdoor Ministry programs do not exist alone. They are preceded and followed by life at home, school, and congregation. Participants in outdoor ministry events take their experiences back home, back to school, back to work, and back to the parish with them. What they have heard or learned in the head has now had a chance to be part of their life experience. Barriers that were once encountered have been removed or at the very least weakened. There is new eagerness and even a new excitement that had not existed before.

Lutheran Outdoor Ministry offers an opportunity that is vital to the spiritual life and welfare of both the youth of our congregations and the youth who do not yet know Christ. Discipleship, centered in God's Word, and experienced in outdoor ministry can play a vital role in the faith development in our youth. As we continue the quest for quality youth ministry opportunities, allow outdoor ministry to be an agent in the Christian faith maturing process of our youth.

— Bob LaCroix, Director, Lutheran Camp Perkins, Stanley Basin, Idaho
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Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

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

District Youth Gathering - May 16-18

Have you received your congregation's copy of the registration information for the May 2003 District Youth Gathering at Seaside, OR? The materials were sent out just before Thanksgiving.

If you need a copy of the materials, please contact Ed Grassel at

<egrassel@aslansoftware.com>

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