



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.

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Forgiveness and Hypocrisy

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It is obvious enough to say: we live in a world of contradictions. The other day, while waiting at a stoplight behind an SUV, I began to note the various statements made on the back of this vehicle. Among other things, there was an American flag sticker which has become so common in recent times. Yet in relatively close proximity there was also an anarchy sticker with some reference to “do whatever.”

The challenge of “saying one thing and doing another” lies at the root of the work I do with young people. In my role as a campus pastor, I am blessed to have continuous, daily contact with the same youth—but that means I get to see more of what they really believe, think and act like. It’s amazing to me how the same students who confess Christ with their mouths, sing praises in Chapel, and discuss the Word of God in the classroom—these same mouths weave together stories of weekend escapades that reflect a completely different belief. These same mouths speak hateful words to others, discuss movies and themes completely out-of-bounds as Christians, and sing along with songs—the titles of which alone would be enough to earn them detention.

It’s obvious to say, and certainly you all face the same frustrations—living our lives in Christ without being hypocrites. We ourselves even face that struggle, and though our growth in Christ is an issue, there is something bigger that we must remember.

The world often looks at the church in the same way we see our youth—saying one thing and doing another. And why would they see it any differently? The world cannot comprehend the idea of forgiveness—true forgiveness, outside of Christ. Certainly conscience rebukes even those who do not have a relationship with God. But then, just as they feel that burden of guilt, they hear us as Christians say, “I’m forgiven, and made into something new!” They see us rejoice in our freedom through Christ—at least until we fail again. It is foolishness outside of Christ to talk about forgiveness, but then to know that we still sin—the world sees nothing but hypocrisy, but we know more.

Hypocrisy is not acceptable, but it is a part of our lives as both sinners and saints. I have seen my own failures in this realm tear my relationships with youth because

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Youth Ministry

Servant Event
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youthEsource
resource!

they did not understand. In my ministry I often search out the attitude behind sin and behavior with my students. There is a difference between someone who, like Paul, laments these sinful bodies vs someone who refuses to see their own sin. Which one is the attitude of each youth? Guiding them in understanding these two different views can make all the difference for a youth seeking to live out his/her life in Christ. It can also be a starting point for discussing their ministry of sharing Christ with others, so that they have a reason for choosing to avoid contradictions in their lives—that others might see us shining like stars in a dark world, and may come to understand that none of us are perfect, just forgiven.

—Gregory Strand, Campus Pastor and an instructor at Portland Lutheran School, Portland, OR <gstrand@portland-lutheran.org>

Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

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

E-Newsletter from Synod Board of Youth Ministry

The Board of Youth Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a monthly e-bulletin with youth ministry information. To subscribe to it, go to <http://www.lcms.org/enews/> and follow the directions.

Check Out Servant Event Possibilities

The Board of Youth ministry coordinates and helps to publicize Servant Events hosted by LC—MS congregations and groups. The new list for summer 2004 events is scheduled to be posted on the web November 3rd. Find out what possibilities there are for your group at <dcs.lcms.org/youth>.

Want Some Ideas for Your Youth Program?

The Board of Youth Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with a grant from Thrivent started a new electronic youth ministry resource available for free on the internet. Check out <www.youthesource.com/> The web page is not just for adults, but for youth too with a number of links to other great web sites. Pass it on to your own youth!

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