



A service of the
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of the
Lutheran Church -
Missouri Synod

Youth Supports

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

May 2004 - Volume 5, Issue 5

- What's the Connection?
- **New youthEsource resource from Synod**

"We need to make sure the youth are growing in the faith..."

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What's the Connection?

"We have to take care of our Youth. We need to make sure they are growing in the faith, learning to serve others, and sharing the gospel message with unchurched teens." These concerns, or thoughts to that effect, seem to be common in most of our churches today. We want to see strong Youth Ministry Programs that keep our teens active as well as help them grow in faith. We want to see our teens excited about Christian living and to show a passion for influencing the world around them toward a relationship with Christ. We've seen the dynamic Youth Ministries of other churches. We've heard the stories of how the lives of their youth have been impacted. We want that for our teens as well.

The results of making these goals reality vary greatly from church to church. Some congregations have youth ministries that draw great numbers. Others have just a handful of faithful youth. Some youth ministries generate lots of high-energy events, numerous small groups, and extensive mission trips. Others struggle to move their teens beyond a focus on fun and games. A number of youth ministries are doing very well at meeting their goals while others don't even know what goals to set. No matter what the size, type, or condition of the Youth Ministry, they all have one thing in common. They need to ask, "What's the connection?"

I'm not talking about a question for Bible study, relationship building, or how to wire the sound system in the Youth Room. I'm talking about the connection between youth ministry and the other ministries in the church. I'm talking about the pattern of influence from one ministry to the next. I'm talking about the process of developing disciples from infancy to adulthood.

Some congregations are starting to see that what happens in one area of ministry directly influences the results in another. However, there are still many congregations out there that put all their eggs in one basket (like Youth Ministry) and think that if it becomes successful they will have it made. They don't see that the effectiveness of the ministry cannot be placed on the shoulders of the Youth Minister, the efforts of the Youth Board, or the number of activities planned for the year. In order for that ministry to be successful it will need to have positive support and influence from the other ministries around it.

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**youthEsource
resource!**

K-Scope!

Congregations (and those of us leading Youth Ministry) need to look at the big picture. How are our teens being prepared for High School Youth Ministry through the efforts of our Middle School and Confirmation Ministries? How does Sunday School and Children's Ministry prepare the Middle Schoolers? Do the other ministries of the church support and involve our youth in meaningful ways? (see April *Youth Supports* article) Do the church's ministries work together to achieve common goals?

Possibly the most important questions to ask deal with adult discipleship, marriage enrichment and parental support. Because spiritually mature individuals build strong, Christ-centered homes and marriages, does the adult discipleship program intentionally guide individuals to maturity in faith? Is the church helping couples to develop and maintain mutually supportive, Christ-centered marriages? Because parents are the most influential force (both positively and negatively) on the faith development of children, does the church help parents grow in their God-ordained role? Does the church support and teach the parents to be the primary teachers of the faith? (See *Passing on the Faith* by Merton Strommen and Richard Hardel)

Maybe your youth ministry already has this type of mindset. Then I encourage you to review and update your connections. Maybe your youth ministry has never thought of how everything works together. In that case, I encourage you to take some time as you plan your activities for the fall and the upcoming year to reflect on Paul's thoughts of the Body in 1 Corinthians 12. Evaluate how your church's ministries work together. Ask yourself, "What is the connection?"

—Scott Mueller, Director of Christian Education at St. John Lutheran Church in Salem, OR. <mueller6@hotmail.com>

Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

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

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!

Have you considered K-Scope?

This year's K-Scope is scheduled for July 11-16. Find out more about this fantastic youth event by contacting Rev. John Schmidt at <kscopeNOW@cs.com>.

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