



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.

October 2004 - Volume 5, Issue 10

- Walking with Chad—A Year of Grief
- Youth Ministry Resources Available

"Chad's dad died today."

I tried to protect Chad from the pain.

As leaders we had helped to establish the culture in which Chad and the group would interact.

Walking With Chad—A Year of Grief

"Dave, this is Kalee. Chad's dad died today." It was the phone call that I had been expecting for some time. Chad's father had won his battle and now was in heaven with Jesus. Chad's battle of grief and loss had just begun. In the year since, Chad has allowed his friends and leaders from youth ministry to walk alongside of him through his year of grief. I have a clearer picture of what adult leaders can and cannot do for young people in the midst of grief. I have seen young people come alongside of Chad and be the healing presence of Jesus Christ in his life.

ESTABLISH THE CULTURE – What We Can Do

When I first heard that Chad's father had passed away, I tried to protect Chad from the pain. I hoped to control the entire grief process to make it bearable for Chad. The reality is that there is much about the grief process that is out of the youth worker's control. What is well within our control is the culture of our group.

Upon hearing of the funeral plans, the word went out to every high school youth. Many responded by saying that they did not know Chad's dad and a few did not even know Chad. Our reply as leaders was that this isn't about knowing Chad's father, but about being there for Chad. Our presence was a way of saying that we are here for Chad now and will be there for him in the weeks and years ahead. We assured the high school youth that all of the adult youth leaders would be there with them.

Plans were made to meet one half hour before the funeral in the youth room. I spoke briefly about the nature of grief and loss. I shared with the young people and adult leaders that it was important that you greet Chad and share some kind of touch. It could be a handshake or a hug or a touch on the arm but that touch was important. I also encouraged them to acknowledge Chad's loss. I gave them specific words like "I am sorry for your loss," or "Chad, I feel terrible for you." We made plans to sit together as a group at the funeral.

Very few young people are taught what to expect or why they attend a funeral. Few see their presence as important to the people who have suffered loss. By being very specific about what was needed from the group and what they could expect to see and hear at the funeral and also by assuring them that the adult leaders would be there with them, the youth were prepared. As leaders we had helped to establish the culture in which Chad and the group would interact.

It is amazing
to me how well
young people
help one
another
grieve.

E-Newsletter
for you to use!

E-Source on
the web!

GRIEF SUPPORT LOOKS DIFFERENT – What We Can Trust Kids to Do

It is amazing to me how well young people help one another grieve. At Chad's father's funeral there were kids greeting Chad and hugging him; there were groups of young people eating and laughing with Chad. At one point during the funeral luncheon a group of Chad's close friends broke into the ball closet in the gym and pulled out a basketball. There were seven kids in shirts and ties and dresses playing a game of knock out. Grief recovery group has never looked so different.

Young people grieve on their own time schedule and in their own ways. While the funeral service may be overwhelming, it is possible to see that same person playing basketball and laughing in the next few minutes. Six months after Chad's father died, Chad showed up in the church parking lot with his brand new pickup truck with a huge sound system. As Chad was showing us his new truck, one of his friends asked, "Dude, this is what you did with the money from your dad, bought a truck?" I almost intervened with what I thought might be a more sensitive and appropriate comment. Chad responded, "Yeah". His friend replied, "That's cool, your dad loved trucks and you guys used to work on them together. I think your dad would be okay with this." Chad started to tear up and his friend put his hand on Chad's shoulder and said, "Its okay, man." Times of grief don't come at scheduled moments, and they don't last forever. In the year since Chad's loss I have witnessed kids praying, laughing, walking in silence and playing with Chad. The healing presence of Jesus has never looked so unique.

-David Noll, Minister of Congregational Life at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington <dnoll@RedeemerSpokane.com>

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.

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.youthsource.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!

Some of the items currently on the web page deal with the subject of sports from the Bible's perspective. There's also an article about parents having to compete for time with their youth's schedules. There are even some youth reviews of current movies. Check it out!

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>