



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 2004 - Volume 5, Issue 12

- Faith that Works
- Youth Ministry Resources Available

"Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words."

"Is faith taught, or caught?"

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## Faith that Works

There is a saying that has been attributed to St. Francis of Assisi that goes like this. "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." I really like the thought of this quote. For me, it pictures what Jesus intended when He said, "You are the Light of the World," Mt. 5:14. James echoes this idea in 2:17-18, when he writes about being doers of the Word, and not hearers only, about faith without works being dead.

Early in our Christian lives we probably learned that we cannot gain heaven by earning it, but that Jesus earned salvation for us. We also learned that faith comes by the working of the Holy Spirit through the hearing of God's Word. If works, then, are necessary for a strong faith, what is the connection, the process, by which we can lead people from the knowledge of faith to the strengthening of faith through action?

Perhaps we can view it this way. Have you ever considered the question, "Is faith taught, or caught?" Certainly, faith is taught, but consider the possibility of faith growth through acting out what we have learned through selfless, God pleasing service to Him by being servants to our neighbors. The growth experienced through deeds is what I would consider 'caught' faith because that deepening of the faith cannot happen without the experience of giving of ourselves in His service.

Most Christians, especially young Christians, do not have the confidence to step out on their own to organize and involve themselves in this type of ministry. They need direction and encouragement. They need someone to get them started by providing the opportunity and the empowerment to serve. It always amazes me to see the growth and faith maturity that happens from these experiences on completion of an event.

Many schools today have a community service requirement of so many hours each term. This is a good thing, but when youth experience and understand God's power working in and through them in this action, perspective and attitude toward life almost always changes dramatically. Faith growth happens because they can see and feel their study and knowledge of the Word put into positive action.

It takes much time and effort to organize and plan these events and activities, but

...imagine the excitement and energy that can be brought to a congregation.

E-Newsletter for you to use!

Check out Servant Event Ideas to match your youth!

they are well worth it. If a young person, or old, can come to realize and feel God's action through them, and, if the Spirit grows their hearts to an understanding of ministry in the world and His purpose for their lives in the Kingdom, imagine the excitement and energy that can be brought to a congregation. Church leaders, show your charges how to step out of the comfort of their group meeting or Bible class and lead them into the excitement of being the Light in all aspects of their lives. Help them to build the confidence in themselves and their life of faith that permits them to be Christ to the world wherever they are.

To the youth, I would suggest that if you or your group is not involved in an area of service, push the issue and ask that this become a part of your groups' identity. Continue to study the Word. Learn as much as you can. Continue to dig as deep into the Word, but then -- put that learning into action. I truly believe that your faith and confidence in your personal relationship with Christ is strengthened greatly through service activities that give praise and glory to God alone.

Learn to preach the Gospel all the time, even without words. It brings life to your faith and a whole new perspective and meaning to your daily life.

— *Ralph Petersen is officially retired but is currently working with the Concondia School of Education. He has planned or helped to plan 19 servant events and served on the Synodical Servant Event Committee for 6 years.*

Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

[http://www.nowlcms.org/educational\\_services//YouthSupports.aspx](http://www.nowlcms.org/educational_services//YouthSupports.aspx)

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## 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.

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## Check out Servant Event Possibilities!

- Your youth don't need to make special trips to be involved in putting their faith to work. They can do servant projects in your own area, month by month.
- There are Synodically sponsored youth events planned for 2005. The theme for the year is *Extreme 2005*.
- If you would like to plan and host a servant event, you can arrange to do that too (probably for the year 2006 for a synodically sponsored event).
- To find out about these possibilities, check out the links for Servant Events at the district web page:  
[http://www.nowlcms.org/educational\\_services//Youth.aspx](http://www.nowlcms.org/educational_services//Youth.aspx)

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