



A service of the
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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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Methods vs. Principles: Finding Delight in Differences

During training for a year of volunteer ministry with Lutheran Youth Encounter, a phrase was drilled into my head by the International Team Director, Robin Bragge. She would repeat this phrase until my teammates and I were ready to print it on a banner...and string her up with it. "Not good. Not bad. Just different." This was not an agenda to teach there is no good or bad, nor a way to program young minds to accept moral relativity, but instead we were guided to appreciate the differences in our teammates' personalities. More importantly, we were encouraged to embrace the cultural differences we would encounter during our ministry in East Africa. For example, respect is a common moral thought of as good. Yet, respect can be expressed in extremely different ways. Thankfully, that phrase became more than just words for me. At some point, as I sat waiting over two hours for our Tanzanian contact to show up one day, the mantra became... "Not better. Not worse. Just different." Believing this to be true about a culture worlds different from my own allowed me to find delight in the differences.

Later, while training to be a challenge course facilitator, my trainer used another expression to illuminate essentially the same insight. He said, "Methods are many. Principles are few. Methods always change. Principles seldom do."

When concepts arise repeatedly in my life, I often wonder if I learned the lesson completely the first time. Was there more I needed to glean from this offered adage? How would you interpret the meaning of these truisms for your life? What ramifications do they have for ministry? Does your mind leap with creativity or fear at the implications? For many, a mere suggestion of change can be a frightening proposal. Change can interrupt our perceived understanding of balance. Some may even burst out in song with arms raised as in the *Fiddler on the Roof* and sing out, "Tradition!" Maybe you've met a few Tevyes in your own church.

Methods vs. principles. Getting caught up in methods is easy. The idea that THIS is the way youth ministry works. THIS is how to do Small Group Ministry. THIS is the way to lead confirmation class. Methods are many. Principles are few.

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The adventure
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E-Newsletter
from Synod

K-Scope
Information!

Before clamoring for “my way or the highway”, perhaps it’s time to grasp not just the how...but the why.

Why do we have pizza nights?
Why do we do small group ministry?
Why do we go on servant events?

Discover the principles, the core reasons behind the potentially endless string of activities. For what reason does youth ministry take place in your church?

For youth to build relationships with other Christian youth?

To grow in depth of understanding of our Savior?

To develop an understanding of the wider church and the need for missions and service?

Maybe it’s all of the above. When you know the why, the methods to achieve those become more obvious. Perhaps you will discover there are other methods and a shift in your paradigm of how to do ministry is not only possible, but relevant and crucial to meet the needs of the people with whom you walk beside in your ministry.

This isn’t a promotion of change for the sake of change. Tradition can bring balance, but understanding the reasons behind the tradition may provide a world of possibilities. Perhaps in the discovering of why, you will discover you’ve already been doing the how.

Methods vs. principles. Random activities vs. purposeful ministry. The how vs. The why. The adventure begins now...the journey to rediscover the principles so the methods have accordingly eternal repercussions.

—*Signe White, Program Director, Camp Perkins Lutheran Outdoor Ministry, Hailey, Idaho* <signe@campperkins.org>

Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

http://www.nowlcms.org/educational_services/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.

Kaleidoscope on the Hood Canal

This year’s K-Scope is scheduled for July 9-14 at the Christ Lutheran Retreat Center on the Olympic Peninsula near Belfair, Washington. This creative adventure in living the Christian community is a six-day experience in spiritual growth for high school youth of the Northwest District. Contact Rev. John Schmidt at <KScopeNOW@cs.com> or at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington, (253)584-2565. The event is limited to 35 participants. Cost is \$150.

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