



A service of the  
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# Youth Supports

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

July 2009 - Volume 10, Issue 7

- Old Meets New: Age and Youth Ministry
- Senior High Youth Gathering Oct. 2-4

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## Old Meets New: Age and Youth Ministry

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It has been my experience that when people hear the words “youth worker,” a particular type of personality or stereotype comes to mind. Often that person is energetic and playful; the type of person who is still a “kid at heart.” It is assumed that people who work with youth need to be outgoing and goofy, with the ability to plan games that involve food, slime, or some other substance being drenched on youth. Youth leaders need to be able to stay up all night, be versed in the rules of “Ultimate Frisbee,” and most importantly youth leaders need to be YOUNG!

I came face to face with this last requirement just a few months ago. I stood in the narthex of my church talking with a woman who was new to our congregation. She asked me various questions about youth group. The usual ones such as when do you meet, what type of things do you do as a group and then as we finished up our conversation she asked me something I was unprepared for. “How old are you?” she inquired. At first I thought she had asked me my age to make sure that I was responsible enough to be running a youth program. “Twenty-seven,” I said confidently, feeling that being in ones late twenties was old enough to be considered trustworthy by other adults. “Oh good. I'm glad you're young. It will make it easier for you to relate to the kids. I just think that youth leaders who are young do a better job,” she replied. I had been worried about not being old enough, and here the stereotype of youth leaders needing to be practically youth themselves had reared its head.

Now don't misunderstand me there is nothing wrong with young people working with youth, but I think it is crucial for teenagers to see what Christian faith looks like at all the age spectrums. I want youth to see that a relationship with Christ is a lifelong process that changes and grows over time. By having individuals in their 20s, 40s, 60s, and beyond building relationships with youth, kids get to see what a lifelong faith looks like in action. My hope is that when teenagers are done with youth group they are stepping into a life of Christian

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maturity that has been learned from having relationships with people who have modeled for them what mature adult Christians look like. If we limit youth workers to those individuals who fit the previously stated stereotype we are automatically excluding large numbers of our congregants from helping with our ministries, and missing out on a vast collection of experiences, faith stories, as well as gifts.

In his book *Family Based Youth Ministry*, Mark DeVries writes about the need for teenagers to see “real” adults living out their faith. He quotes Ben Petterson as saying, “A twenty-year-old youth worker may be effective in getting kids attention, but he or she often isn't able to bridge the gap between kids and the adult community, primarily because the youth worker isn't yet a full member of that adult community. That's not the youth worker's fault; it is, however, a serious limitation.”<sup>1</sup> If we want kids to become integrated in a faith community as adults, then we need to be building the bridges that will allow them to accomplish this. If attracting youth is our goal, then young youth workers will help us succeed, but if we want lifelong Christian discipleship to grow out of this attraction, it is my opinion that we need to be open to incorporating all ages-young and old-into our ministries.

1. DeVries, Mark *Family Based Youth Ministry*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004, p. 102

—Sarah Eustice-Brown, Director of Christian Education, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Vancouver, WA ([dce@vanflock.org](mailto:dce@vanflock.org))

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

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### **Kaleidoscope 2009**

Kaleidoscope 2009 has been scheduled for Aug. 2-7 at the Delano Bay Christian Camp on Washington's Key Peninsula about 25 miles west of Tacoma. The event is for youth who are entering 10th grade in the fall of '09 through to '09 graduates. Contact Rev. John Schmidt at 253-582-4043 or [Jubilate@comcast.net](mailto:Jubilate@comcast.net) for more information.

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### **Northwest District Senior High Youth Gathering!**

The Northwest District Senior High Youth Gathering is coming up soon. It's scheduled for October 2-4 at the Washington Family Ranch in Antelope, OR. For more information contact Jeff Kranich at [jkranich@hopesseattle.org](mailto:jkranich@hopesseattle.org). The theme is *The Real World*.

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