



# REACH!

Produced by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Commission on Youth Discipleship

## Service: Coming Down from the Mountaintop

by Joel A. Nelson, WELS Youth Discipleship Administrator

The article that introduced the first REACH! newsletter (Fall 2002) and described why the newsletter was so named carried this paragraph:

*So many times, youth ministry is described as a way “to reach teens,” a we-go-to-them kind of thing. But wouldn’t it be better if youth ministry, through the power of the Holy Spirit, helped teens to “reach” Jesus and reach out to others, getting off themselves personally and stretching them to do more for Christ and others?*

Any good youth ministry has, as one of its key components, an element of service. The *WELS Handbook for Teen Ministry* (1996) says service should be one of the five key parts of a balanced ministry to young people—the other four are worship, education, fellowship, and recreation. While all five parts are important, the time has come for our youth ministries to ratchet up what they are doing relative to service. Mark DeVries says, “Spiritual maturity cannot be mass-produced in teens’ lives. These attitudes are created as young people move out of the comfortable bubble of the youth program and live out their faith through the challenging and often monotonous experiences of life...It is in those experiences that Christian character is often formed...Christian faith may begin on the mountaintop, but Christian character is formed in the crucible of pain” (*Family Based Youth Ministry*, 1994, p. 27).

DeVries’ point is not that service is or should be painful, but that youth ministry should not be all fun and games, because the life of a Christian is not all fun and games. His point is that Christian faith can be tested, refined, and strengthened through service. Interestingly enough, service is really a lot of fun, as young people experiment with their abilities, join together in Christian teamwork, bring happiness and help to others, and feel the satisfaction of serving the Lord, following his example, and living in ways that show thanks for all he has done for them.

Service can take many forms, and summer might be a good time to engage your teens in a service activity, especially if you want to do something that will make your group (and congregation) known in the community. Service activities can also help to shift the para-

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### AND MUCH MORE!

Comments about this **REACH!**

and ideas for future issues can be directed to . . .

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digm of how we view teens. The National Youth Leadership Council <www.nylc.org> expresses the idea with the following graphic:

Traditional View	Service-Learning View
Teens utilize resources	Teens act as resources
Teens are passive	Teens are active
Teens are consumers	Teens are producers
Teens need help	Teens offer help
Teens are recipients	Teens are givers
Teens are victims	Teens are leaders

Talk about all of this with your teens. You may be surprised to find that many of them have been looking for something "bigger and better" to do. Experts say the teen years are a time for heroism and that teens want to be engaged in more heroic, meaningful, and life changing activities. A summer service project could be just the thing to get their faith (and yours, too) "off the mountaintop" and into the streets of the real world, where it can be tested, refined, strengthened, and witnessed to all who see.

## Here's What I'd Do...

- ▶ Talk with your teens about service, what the Bible says, how Jesus was the model, why it's good to do, how it shows our love for Christ, how it can be a way to reach out to others with Jesus, etc.
- ▶ Pray for the Lord's guidance, wisdom, and help.

- ▶ Brainstorm some things in the community that might need doing.
- ▶ Get individuals or small groups to do some research about actual needs: call City Hall, the Chamber of Commerce, the local Police or Fire Station, the Town Library, the local Food Bank, talk to your pastor, your congregation chairman, other members who might be in the know, etc.
- ▶ Have groups report back what they learned and develop a list of possible service projects and the pros and cons of doing each project. Vote on one to do.
- ▶ Work with the entity/group/people you will be serving to coordinate the activity, dates, costs, schedule, what they will do, what you'll do, how you'll promote your activity, get helpers, etc.
- ▶ Do the project. Have fun. Think about what you are doing and why you are doing it.
- ▶ Some time after the project is completed come back together as a group and reflect on what you did, how you felt, what was great, what was bad, how this served others, how this served God, how it helped you as individuals, what it did to your view of the community and the people in it, what you learned about yourself and others, why this was a God-pleasing activity, etc. Talk about doing/not doing this kind of thing again.
- ▶ Celebrate! Pat yourselves on the back a little, share your story with your congregation members. Thank the Lord for the opportunity to serve him and others.

### YOU CAN QUOTE ME!

Teens should not be viewed as targets of ministry but as developers of it.



### Date/Location/Cost

- Fri.-Sun. September 17-19, 2004.
- Naperville, IL (25 miles west of Chicago).
- \$135/person covers everything-lodging, meals, materials...everything!

### Keynote Presentations:

- "Building from the Ground Up: The Importance of Parents and Home"
- "Building an Outreaching Ministry: The Importance of Sharing Jesus with Everyone"
- "Building a Ministry of Strong Partnerships: The Importance of Working Together"

**Sectionals** on Parenting, Catechism and Confirmation, Special Needs, Sunday School, VBS, Early Childhood, Teens, Outreach, Christian Camps, Para-Synodical Youth Ministries PLUS: Networking Nooks, Models Sharing, Open Space Discussions, Organization Displays, and the NPH Bookstore.

**Special Bonus!!!** A pre-conference workshop on the new "Faith Stepping Stones" curriculum will be conducted the day of September 17 by the authors and Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service staff. Cost \$89.00.

**Registration details coming soon. Email <cyd@sab.wels.net> for more information.**

# Put Your Faith In Action

by Pastor Richard Warnecke, Administrator WELS Kingdom Workers Faith in Action

Greetings from WELS Kingdom Workers Faith in Action ministry! Would you and the teens in your congregation like to serve the Lord and others this summer? What follows are some VBS, canvassing/follow up, and Christian camp opportunities.

PLACE	DATES	WHAT IS IT/WHO'S NEEDED
Good Shepherd, S. Attleboro, MA and St. Paul, Amherst, NH	July 31-August 15	VBS
Messiah Lutheran, S. Windsor, CT and Christ the Redeemer, Barre, VT	July 24-August 8	VBS
King of Kings, Clifton Park, NY	August 7-15	VBS
Shepherd of Palms, Jupiter, FL and Hope Lutheran, W. Palm Beach, FL		Bible Camps
Heritage, Lindenhurst, IL	July 31-August 8	2 people
Peace, Bradenton, FL	June 19-July 10 July 10-31	Summer Camps 3 females
Lord of Lords, Casper, WY	June 19-27	VBS/Sports Camp 6-12 people
St. Mark's/ Mt. Olive, Lincoln, NE,	May 29 - June 13	Canvassing and VBS 6-12 people
Star of Bethlehem, Urbana, IL	July 3-18	Canvassing, and VBS 2-4 people
Orleans, Ontario, Canada	August 7-15	Canvass and VBS 4-6 people
Northdale, Tampa, FL	June 12-20	VBS and follow up
Shepherd of the Hills, Knoxville, TN,	June 12-20	Canvassing, VBS 4 people
Prince of Peace, Yankton, SD	July 31-August 8	Soccer camp/VBS 4-8 people
Sola Fide, Lawrenceville, GA	June 19-27	VBS 4 people
Camp Shiloh, Pittsburg, TX	July 3-11 July 11-15	Art Camp & Jesus Cares Camp 12-15 people
New Life, Lake Zurich, IL	August 7-15	Teach VBS Girls Volleyball Camp 4-5 people
Redeemer/Trinity, New Hampton, IA	June 5-13	Canvassing 6-10 people
Faith, Radcliff, KY	July 10-18	Follow up to VBS 4 people
Immanuel, Salem, OR	July 24-August 15	Canvassing, VBS follow-up 4 people
Faith, Kokomo, IN	July 31-August 8	Canvassing, pamphlet distribution 2 people
Sure Foundation, NY, NY	July 17-August 1	Teach ESL to Hispanics Must Speak Spanish 3 people

These are most of the current opportunities. Many can be filled by high school students with a chaperone. College students or adults can help with any. First come, first served. Obtain an application from Pastor Warnecke ASAP: 1-800-466-9357 or email fia@wkw.wels.net. You can check other details at <www.wels.net/wkw>.

# Check the Arrow When Reviewing Resources

by Pastor James Plocher, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Vassar, MI

So, you are looking for a good Bible Study to use with your youth ministry group. Ready-made materials are often available from various places. Often they are visually interesting. They touch on timely topics. It would save a lot of time to use them. But are they a good resource?

The first thing to evaluate is faithfulness to Scripture. We do not tolerate any false teaching. Special areas to note are baptism, the work of the Holy Spirit, and conversion. Materials that come from a Reformed background will have problems there. Sometimes all you can do is borrow introductions and activities and construct the lesson yourself.

Is a lesson good if it does not teach false doctrine? I would encourage you to expect more from your materials. The hallmark of Lutheran teaching is the proper understanding of Law and Gospel. Anything we present must be clear in its proclamation of sin and grace.

A good way to double-check your lessons, whether borrowed or home-made, is to think of an arrow. Where does your lesson put the emphasis? Does it proclaim what God has done and point your class to the Savior? Does the arrow point at God? Or is most of your time and energy spent on urging your class to live better Christian lives? Does the arrow point at us?

If the general emphasis of the lesson points to us, then it needs some work. You see, that is the Law. The Law reveals my sin, my failures, my shortcomings. But it does not forgive. The Law shows me the right path to follow and holds the ideal in front of me. But it cannot move me forward one inch. That is the exclusive domain of the Gospel. Jesus has

forgiven all your sin. Point the arrow at him! See what he has done. With eyes fixed on him, there is no room for feeling worthless, giving up, or running away. The gospel does more than forgive sin. It motivates us to live eagerly for our Savior. Knowing the rich feast my Jesus lays out in the Bible,

I want to dig in to it. Confident of the peace the risen Savior gives, I share peace with others. With the arrow firmly pointed at Jesus, my Christian life will flourish.

During a lesson, we really need the arrow to point in both directions. I need the arrow to point to me, revealing my sins and condemning me for my guilt. But I especially need to be pointed to Christ, who forgives all my sin. I do need the arrow to point to me, showing me the way to go. But I really need to see my Savior ahead of me, and behind me, and even

carrying me along the path by his gospel.

So evaluate any resources you find, and evaluate your lessons. Which way does the arrow point in them? Unfortunately, you can expect most materials published for the Christian Book Store to keep the arrow pointed down at us. They are concerned with good morals and proper behavior. Recognize what is missing: the gospel. Make sure the arrow points to the Savior. You have been charged with keeping the focus on Jesus. He is not just an add-on afterthought to your youth ministry. He is the heart of it. Point the arrow at what God has done for us. That is good stuff.

Pastor Plocher is also the CYD Coordinator for the Michigan District. To speak more with him about this article email: [jimplocher@tds.net](mailto:jimplocher@tds.net).



## It's here!

*Walk In My World*, a four-part teen/parent Bible study series produced by the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship and Joel Hochmuth, former CNN correspondent. Solid Biblical principles in a state-of-the-art video news magazine style. Real-life stories of WELS teens and their families confronting issues from a spiritual point of view. WELS teens talk openly and honestly about a gay sibling, divorced parents, their own sexual sins, coping with serious illness, and witnessing for Christ in their everyday lives. Order from [www.shopwels.net](http://www.shopwels.net). **Order:** #38-3089. **Cost:** \$39.95 plus shipping and handling for video, CD, binder with student lessons and leader's guides.



# Resource Recommendations

## Life in the Real World-Five Minute Devotions for Teens

Eileen Ritter / 1999 / 128 pages / Northwestern Publishing House or [www.shopwels.net](http://www.shopwels.net)

Volume 1: #06N2658 / \$7.99

Volume 2: #06N2803 / \$7.99

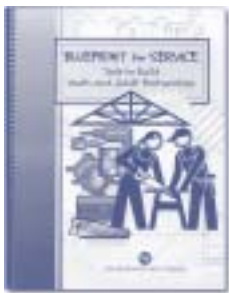
I use *Life in the Real World* with my confirmation class [It could have other uses as well]. It gives a short story or situation followed by God's Word, then an "in my life" application section. Each devotion closes with a prayer. The devotions provide great points for discussion. I have had to remind my students that it was a devotion, because the issues presented generate so much discussion. - *Pastor Gene Sims, Emmanuel Lutheran Church-Tempe, AZ*

## Into All the World

CD-ROM / 2003 / Northwestern Publishing House or [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net)

#33N0118 / \$39.99

Newly released, *Into All the World*, allows users to explore the growth of the early church, highlighting the missionary journeys of Paul. Probably more than anything, it's a resource that would allow a teacher (or user) to share insights into this time period. Think electronic flannel graph, and that's a pretty good picture. While perhaps more designed for group use (adults, teens, and upper grades), *Into All the World* would also be beneficial for individuals. - *Mark Buske, NPH Director of Marketing*



## Blueprint for Service: Tools to Build Youth and Adult Partnerships

Available from CYD / 2000 / 76 pages

This 2000 resource, no longer in print, was developed by the former *Aid Association for Lutherans*, and discusses how to build youth volunteerism and successful service experiences. CYD has been given permission to make copies as requested. Cost: \$4.00.

## Beyond Leaf Raking: Learning to Serve/Serving to Learn

Peter Benson & Eugene Roehlkepartain / 1993 / 123 pages

Abingdon Press (out of print but available at [www.alibris.com](http://www.alibris.com)) / \$13.95

Research shows that youth who serve others are more likely to have a positive outlook on life and are less likely to be involved in at-risk behaviors. *Beyond Leaf Raking* shows you how to integrate service-learning into youth ministry and to measure its impact on youth.



## Hands-On Service Ideas for Youth Groups

Steve Case & Fred Cornforth / 1995 / 128 pages

Group, Inc. (out of print but available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) / \$8.00

Here's a practical, step-by-step plan for developing your group's service lifestyle...and reaping the benefits. Over 100 ideas will help your teens to put their faith into action through service.

**Tell us what you think...**

**What resources or helps do you need most when it comes to your ministry to teens?**

**Email us your thoughts: [cyd@sab.wels.net](mailto:cyd@sab.wels.net)**



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# REACH!

## CYD's Vision for Teens Could Be Yours, Too

Through counsel, resources, support, and networking, CYD will assist WELS congregations as they develop and maintain Christ-centered ministries to teens. CYD assistance will encourage partnering with parents and families; nurturing intergenerational connections; staffing with qualified, caring, and spiritual people; outreach; and a balance of worship, education, service, fellowship, and recreation.

### CYD will help congregations to...

- Recognize the primacy of parents in effective youth ministry.
- Develop effective approaches for recruiting youth leaders.
- Provide resources and strategies for effectively training youth leaders.
- Develop strategies for addressing the issue of teen attrition.
- Evaluate their current confirmation practice and suggesting alternative or supplemental approaches that recognize the role of parents and employ teaching strategies that are in line with how children learn.
- Involve their teens in local, district, and national WELS ministry activities.
- Promote and encourage service and learning opportunities for youth at the congregational, district, and national levels.

- Develop strategies for reaching out to the lost through teen ministry.
- Develop strategies that connect teens with younger and older generations.
- Effectively use the *Christ-Light* curriculum in high schools and congregational youth Bible study.
- Network with other WELS congregations, pastors, staff ministers, youth leaders, and lay leaders to strengthen teen ministry.
- Network with other WELS entities that have a vested interest in the advancement of teen ministry.



Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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