



REACH!

Produced by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Commission on Youth Discipleship

New Studies Help Renew Ministry to Youth

by Dr. Joel Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD) recently published a series of Bible studies/discussion guides under the title, *Creating Youth-full Churches*. This special resource seeks to involve youth, parents, adults, and church leaders in discussing the ministry of their churches. The title's play on words with the word "youth-full" focuses on an important reality: congregations that succeed at engaging their younger, more youthful members in ministry are congregations that are more youth-full. They have more children, teens, and young adults attending and active.

As members of the Body of Christ, Christian youth help to make the church complete. Their God-given gifts, abilities, and insights

are important, not only because these children, teens, and young adults are the church of tomorrow, but also because they are the church of today. They can be valuable partners in the church's ministry. *Creating Youth-full Churches* is aimed at getting youth and adults talking as a first step toward engaging youth in the ministry of the church in more direct ways.

The *Creating Youth-full Churches* materials flowed out of the research study prepared by Bret Goodman Marketing (September, 2005) entitled, *Why Young People Leave WELS*. This national study was conducted under the auspices of CYD in response to a special 2003 WELS Convention resolution.

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

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Screen-Time Shock

from

www.connectwithkids.com/teentrends

For some teens, *screen time* rivals time spent at school, according to new research. The recent study looked at computer and TV time to determine how many hours teenagers spend in front of a monitor.

The results are shocking:

- 60% of teens spend 20 hours a week in front of a monitor,
- 33% spend 40 hours per week and
- 7% spend 50 hours per week.

Interestingly enough, kids whose parents had lower education levels spent more time in front of monitors.

And, not surprisingly, the more time spent in front of monitors, the higher the risk of obesity and heart disease. Additionally, teens who come from a more socially-economic disadvantaged area were more likely to spend a greater number of hours watching TV or using a computer due to lack of access to other activities in their neighborhood.



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You can find the study and all the related information at www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy.

The Goodman study identified a number of issues and presented several recommendations for congregations to discuss concerning youth attitudes toward their church's ministry. *Creating Youth-full Churches* takes a look at these issues and recommendations in the light of God's Word and from the perspective that says youth and adults can and should work together in strengthening their churches' ministries. The individual *Creating Youth-full Churches* lessons are...

- **Train a Child in the Way He Should Go:**
The Role of Parents and Church in the Lives of Youth
- **Shout for Joy to the Lord – Enter His Courts with Praise:**
Keeping Young People Engaged in Worship
- **Everyone Who Calls on the Name of the Lord Will Be Saved:**
Teaching Young People – All People – a Proper Understanding of the Church and Its Mission
- **A Woman Who Feels the Lord Is to Be Praised:**
Maintaining a Proper Appreciation for Women and Their Role in God's Kingdom
- **Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophesy:**
Involving Youth in the Gospel Work of the Church

The individual studies/discussion guides were written by Martin Luther College professor and pastor, David Sellnow, and reviewed by all the members of the CYD: Pastor Tom Schneider (chairman); Pastor Ray Schumacher (NPH), Pastor Ross Stelljes, Pastor Richard Warnecke, Professor Stephen Geiger (WLS), Mr. Harvey Dunn, and Dr. Joel Nelson (CYD Administrator).

As another step in fulfilling the Synod's desire to help congregations understand and address the reasons for why young people leave them, CYD sent all WELS Circuit Pastors a letter describing the *Creating Youth-full Churches* resources in the hopes that,

- 1) they would add the studies/discussion guides to the regular Bible study done at circuit meetings/gatherings and
- 2) encourage all congregations in their circuits to consider using the studies/discussion guides at the local level.

Creating Youth-full Churches participant lessons, leader's guides, and aggregated Bible passages in Word and pdf formats are all available for free download at www.wels.net/jump/youthstudy.

God-willing, all WELS congregations will use *Creating Youth-full Churches*, engage in the study of the Word and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, renew their ministries to young people.

Four Tips for Better Youth Ministry

by Brian Arthur Lampe – youth leader at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, WI

Make more of people, not programs.

Somehow we have to learn that it doesn't take an organized structure to do real ministry. Effective ministry can happen in our kitchens around a cup of coffee or in our living rooms with our feet propped up on the coffee table. I'm becoming increasingly convinced that today's students are much more impressed by adults who genuinely care about them than they are with overly organized and structured programs. Don't get me wrong; I see value in organization and structure. However, personal relationships built on the foundation of Christ have a real advantage when compared to the over development of curriculum, and micro-management.

Stress relationships, not rooms.

It seems that the modern church is more interested in building buildings than building lives. That statement may be a bit sarcastic, but this view of ministry is wrong. A pastor who recently experienced a fire in his church building that practically destroyed the facility had these words to offer: "Even though insurance paid for the reconstruction of our building, during the process, I'd almost like to do without our building permanently. Without the building our people were closer, the fellowship seemed to be more genuine, and church seemed to be real." Perhaps he was right. I'm convinced that sometimes our fancy buildings and facilities get in the way of Jesus ministry. I am in no way saying new buildings are a bad idea, but we need to remember to keep the congregation focused on Christ.

Build trust instead of technology.

I certainly enjoy modern technology. But, let's all be careful not to let our electronic gadgets isolate us from people. I believe that if youth workers made rules that wouldn't let kids bring those i-pods, Guitar Hero, etc. to youth events or

youth trips, we actually would assist our students in connecting better with each other. I'm sure that technology can help us stay connected to our students. Keeping in touch with our students with today's modern technology is important, however let's not lose sight of the advantage of spending time with them in person.

Emphasize mentoring over methods.

Somehow it seems that contemporary youth ministry has become "method" crazy. "How to" has become the latest and greatest craze. It is imperative for all of us to work on our creativity and imagination. All of us should get better at implementing creative Bible learning and imaginative methods in our teaching. But we should never sacrifice Biblical truth at the altar of student involvement or interaction. It also seems like today's youth workers are constantly looking for the next "what works" method for ministry.

Countless conferences and seminars tout the latest and greatest technique for youth ministry. These methods are fine, but we must never forget that real, Biblical ministry should focus on the spiritual practices of basic discipleship and mentoring.

Mentoring is a concept that must be intentionally implemented into the fabric of our ministries. It can be an effective

way to connect the various generations with each other in our churches. The fundamental idea of mentoring is that caring, godly adults should take the initiative to develop growing relationships with young people. In other words, we must teach adults to do what they normally do, just to do it with students. One national youth ministry organization recently reported that 90 percent of today's teenagers stated that they would love to have an adult mentor. That's the concept so aptly described in Titus 2. Older men and older women can have an incredible mentoring ministry by spending time with teenagers.



Consider a KOINE Concert

by Pastor Jay Schmidt, CYD District Coordinator – Dakota-Montana District

About 100 people gathered at the church building. All were given copies of Christian Worship. Pre-service music peaked the interest of the congregation as they waited for the opening hymn. “Abide With Me” and other well-known hymns were sung. The kids went up for a special children’s song. The teens sang hymns with those old enough to be their grandparents. All went home edified and encouraged through Word and song. This happens every time Lutherans gather for worship. And this is what Koine prays happens when people gather for their concerts.

Who is Koine? Koine is a church band made up of five WELS members who play old hymns with a new style. Koine believes their purpose is to help Lutherans experience Lutheran hymns all over again by bringing new life to the original meaning of words Lutherans grew up singing. And by the way, they look right to Christian Worship for songs to meet that purpose.

Recently Koine played an outdoor concert sponsored by the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in South Shore, SD. At this concert, Koine delivered what they promised: They sang about God’s love, God’s forgiveness and God’s promises to be there when his people need them. Some who attended the concert came frustrated by the day they had and left refreshed and energized to face the next day. Others attended the concert and heard again a message they had not heard in some time due to a lack of worship attendance. Still others found quiet contentment as reassuring hymn verses came out of the band’s speaker system.

The Koine experience reminds us all that our Lutheran hymns in Christian Worship do not belong only to Sunday mornings. We need the reminder of God’s love for us no matter where we are or what day of the week it is. You have a bad day at work, you get into an argument with a parent or a friend, you just feel down in the dumps—God has a song for that! “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” “Abide With Me,” “Jesus Priceless Treasure” these songs remind us of God’s endless love for us. They remind us that God is there for us no matter what our mood or what problems we are facing.

Because of the message of comfort they bring, Koine believes they are in a unique position to reach the youth of our synod. At first they were surprised by how well high school

aged audiences responded to their music and message. However, the more they play the more they see it doesn’t take long for high school aged kids to realize that Koine isn’t your average praise band out to entertain and wow them for an hour. Koine’s music shares with our WELS kids the message they need to hear: God loves them. Koine believes they can reach the high school crowd by sharing with them the same hymns and message they heard when they were in grade school. By singing these hymns is a new way, Koine connects WELS youth with their Lutheran heritage and reminds them we have great songs in our hymnals, we have great music in the songs we use for worship, and it is OK to be Lutheran.

Today’s WELS youth leaders can learn from the way Koine reaches out to youth. To reach our kids we don’t need the latest and the greatest, but we can’t settle for a “you’ll like it because I said you’ll like it” rut either. Our WELS kids love Jesus, they love hearing about Jesus’ love for them and they are Lutheran. We don’t need a new message to reach our youth, but we can never stop seeking new ways to share God’s message with them. Might a hymn sing reconnect a youth group to Jesus? Might using the talents in your youth group or congregation to sing old Lutheran favorites in new ways reconnect your kids to the beautiful message of law and gospel, sin and forgiveness through Jesus? Might our youth be encouraged to share their faith with friends by sharing their music with their friends?

Challenge the teens in your congregation to come up with their own new way of singing their favorite hymns. Get a hold of some Koine CDs and have a listening party at which you could share the stories behind some of your teen’s favorite hymns. Or maybe even encourage area youth leaders and pastors to “book” Koine for an evening.

Hearing old favorites in a new way is a good reminder that our kids can be proud of being Lutheran and be proud of the way Lutherans sing God’s praises—whether we are singing them in a traditional worship setting, humming them while driving, or finishing out a shift at work. To enjoy Koine’s music, get a little lift from God’s promises and recall who we are as Lutherans, check Koine’s website (www.koine-music.com). See if Koine will be in your area, talk to your pastor about getting Koine to your area, order a Koine CD from Northwestern Publishing House, or go online and sample Koine’s music for yourself.

You Won't Know Until You Ask

by Dave Stuht, Staff Minister — St. Peter Lutheran Church
St. Albert, Alberta, Canada

I just wanted to let *REACH!* readers know of a unique opportunity we have been blessed with here in St. Albert, Alberta. I was trying to find a way to offer a Bible study for my youth at St. Peter and at the same time possibly reach out to the kids of the community. On a whim I spoke with a member of mine who volunteers at her son's school and asked her what she thought about holding a Bible Study at the Jr. High School. She thought it was a wonderful



idea; however, we both were somewhat skeptical about the idea. You may or may not know that mission work in Canada is slow-going at times. The economy here in Alberta is better than it has ever been due to the thriving oil industry. This makes outreach difficult as people feel, that with money, they have everything they

need. Nevertheless, she presented the idea to the school principal and despite our reluctance, the Holy Spirit led him to agree to allow our Bible study. Not only was he agreeable to holding the Bible study at his school, but he even gave it a name.

We started with two youth who attend the school and are members of our congregation adding a third (my son) a week later. Soon after, we rejoiced at having a fourth join us who was a friend of one of the original members of the group. Though we have not grown in great numbers quickly, we are thankful to our Heavenly Father for the opportunity to share the Good News with this precious four. We have finished up for the year with hopes of continuing on in the summer at a local coffee shop and, God willing, continue this work in the next school year.

As privileged leaders of the Body of Christ, we ought to always remember that we should go with our "implausible" ideas, trusting that the Lord of this world can make all plausible.

Future Issues Only Online

Beginning with the Fall 2008 edition, *REACH!* will only be available online. **YOU WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO RECEIVE IT IN THE MAIL.** To get *REACH!* online please do the following:

- 1) Go to www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship.
- 2) Click on the "Newsletters" image.
- 3) Click on the appropriate, blue "E-mail Notification" link.
- 4) Follow the steps in the "Delivery Methods" box at the very bottom of the page.
- 5) Watch for the e-mail about the new issue.

Ideas to Honor Your High School Seniors

by Joy and Michael Lenz
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
Oconomowoc, WI

- Display senior pictures in May thru June in your church. Include names, high school they are graduating from and college or employment plans after high school.
- Plan a brunch on Sunday morning for the seniors and their parents! Get donations from the community. We were able to get bagels, cream cheese, and coffee donated which was a great selling point for the event.
- Get information or bring in guest speakers from WELS college campus ministry programs (wels.net/cm). Since you know where the teens are going to college, give them their specific campus ministry information.
- Give gifts to honor graduates like ice cream sundae gift certificates (some restaurants will donate these) or devotionals for college students. Thank them for their membership/service to your church thus far and encourage them to stay connected to God as they go out into the world.



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Check Out These Great Web Sites



www.connectwithkids.com/teentrends/

The researchers at *Connect with Kids* have their ear to the ground. Whether it's the enormous new popularity of high school music courses or the depressing trend toward self-cutting, they know about it before the mainstream media does. And so will you! It's all in our free monthly online newsletter: Teen Trends. (This is not a WELS resource, so be discerning.)

http://www.churchandchange.org/site/cpage.asp?cpage_id=4174&sec_id=2544

Get ideas and insights from other WELS youth ministry leaders on the WELS "Church and Change" Idea Exchange - Teen Page.

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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