



REACH!

Produced by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Commission on Youth Discipleship

Cultivating a Youth Ministry That Matters: Part IV

by Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

This series of articles is focusing on cultivating solid youth ministries. Cultivating is a good metaphor because through our ministries to pre-teens and teens, and our emphasis on the Means of Grace, we are preparing youth to grow. Good youth ministries 1) plant early, 2) dig in with parents, 3) fertilize friendships, 4) rototill resources, and 5) get down and dirty with those served. Planting Early, Digging in with Parents, and Fertilizing Friendships have been covered in previous issues. This article looks at Rototilling Resources.

Rototill Resources

When it comes to resources for cultivating youth ministries that matter, there's some good news and some bad news. The "good" news is that there are all kinds of things out there. Many Christian organizations and publishing entities produce materials for those engaged in ministry to teens. So finding things is not that hard. The "bad" news is that some of these resources contain things inconsistent with what we believe and teach as WELS youth ministers: biggest three probably being decision theology, a blurring of the distinctions between Law and Gospel, and an over-emphasis on Jesus in us over Jesus for us. Another "bad" news is that WELS publishing entities do not produce a lot of resources in the teen ministry area. We just don't have the financial and human resources required to make it happen. That said, there are still many very good things out there to use.

WELS Produced

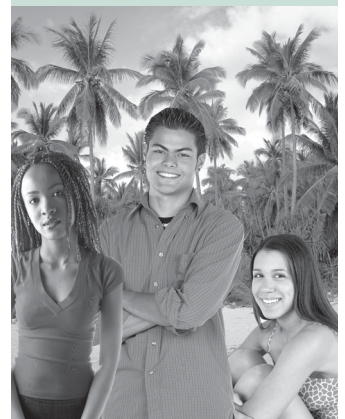
WELS Youth Discipleship (www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship) has several items listed on its Web site. Check the "Consultations and Resources" collection and the "Teen Ministry Resources" folder. LivingBold, the WELS Web site for teens, (www.livingbold.net) has various items that could be of interest. Check out the "Links Lot" where links to several resources are posted. Just alerting your teens that this site exists would be a start. Northwestern Publishing House, the WELS publisher, (www.nph.net) has several items. Type "youth" into the search box. Kremer Publications, a WELS member publisher, might have some things also (www.kremerpublications.com). WELS pastors/members with Web sites of other awesome youth ministry resources are Point of Power (www.pointofpower.com) and Nooma (www.nooma.com).

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Comments about this **REACH!** and ideas for future issues can be directed to . . .

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Non-WELS Resources

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (www.lcms.org) would have some things that could be of help. Look in “Resources for” then “Youth.” Concordia Publishing House, the publishing arm of the LCMS, (www.cph.org) would be another place to look. Check out their “Youth Ministry” area. Group Publishing (www.grouppublishing.com) a Christian, non-denominational company in Loveland, CO produces all kinds of things. See their “Youth Ministry” area. Group also has two Web areas called Volunteer Central (www.grouppublishing.com/cvc) and Youth Ministry.com (www.YouthMinistry.com) that contain all kinds of on-line resources. Youth Specialties (www.youthspecialties.com) is another publisher with some very helpful items. Finally try Blue Fish TV (www.bluefishtv.com). This organization specializes in video resources that are quite interesting and thought provoking. Again, be discerning with non-WELS resources. Running the resources past your pastor would be a great idea, especially if you have any doubts.

You can also share with WELS Youth Discipleship and others what you are doing/using via this newsletter. In addition to sharing the stories of model and innovative WELS youth ministries, *REACH!* frequently publishes reviews and recommendations that have been done by WELS pastors and youth ministers. You can see past reviews in the *REACH!* archive on the WELS Youth Discipleship Web site in the “Newsletters Archive” area. Also, a special discussion board on the CYD Web site has just been added. The discussion board is called “YOUTHINK: Youth Leaders Share” and has a new area labeled, “Youth Ministry Resource Recommendations/Evaluations.” There you can post and read reviews and recommendations for audio, print, video, and web teen/youth ministry resources.

One WELS CYD resource that has gotten good buzz is the new video news-magazine and Bible studies called, *Walk In My World*. Series 1, already being used by 350 congrega-

tions, tells the stories of real WELS teens and their families under the following four titles: Living for God in an Ungodly World, Dealing with Divorce, Following God’s Plan with the Opposite Sex, and Coping When Trouble Hits Close to Home. Series 2 (not yet completed) will cover these four stories: Witnessing Your Faith Among Your Peers, Recovering from Addiction, God Works Good Through Tragedy, and Living for Jesus and Touching Others. The *Walk In My World* lessons and videos are produced with the help of WELS member, Joel Hochmuth, a former CNN correspondent in Atlanta. *Walk In My World* has been used in various ways in WELS: Bible classes, retreats, week-end seminars, and even in sermons (see related story on page 4).

I also think a youth minister’s library should have a couple good books on Christian counseling like *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* by Gary R. Collins, Ph.D. (Word Publishing) and *Handbook on Counseling Youth* by Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler (W Publishing Group). These books won’t qualify you to be a professional counselor, but they will help you to understand teens and their families better, learn about many of the issues teens face today, address preliminary counseling that comes your way, and help you to better understand when to refer counselees to their pastor and/or professional experts.

Three other great books for the youth minister’s shelf are 1) *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry* by Doug Fields (Zondervan Publishing) – a review of this book was done in the Winter 2004 issue of *REACH!*, 2) *Family Based Youth Ministry* by Mark DeVries (InterVarsity Press), and 3) *How to Really Love Your Teenager* by Dr. Ross Campbell (Victor Books).

Finding good youth ministry resources can be a very time-consuming process. But when you find something that’s really cool and helpful, it’s time well spent. Happy rototilling!

2007 Rally Committee Teens Are Nominated

15 WELS teens (13 female and 2 male) have been nominated to become members of the 2007 WELS International Youth Rally Planning Committee. They are Ariel Willeson (Sioux Falls, SD), Grace Bey (Crete, IL), Sara Tietz (Randolph, WI), Bethany Wehrenberg (Apple Valley, MN), Brittini Wentzel (Menomonie, WI), Brittany Steinmeyer (Menomonie, WI), Stephen Vandenberg (Appleton, WI), Maggie Gleason (Nicollet, MN), Josh Kohnhorst (Tomah, WI), Kayleigh Marten (Tomah, WI), Ashley Heun (Port Washington, WI), Rhianna Nichols (Tomah, WI), Kayla Mundstock (Phoenix, AZ), Tricia Duncan (Tomah, WI), and Hanna Palmberg (Menomonie, WI).

In November the selection committee will pick the three teens that will serve and one alternate. The 2007 Rally Planning Committee will begin its official work after the first of the year. The WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship thanks all of the teens and adults who partnered together to submit the 2007 nominations.

Youth In Real Ministry:

What We Can Learn From The Caribbean Model

by Erik Landwehr, Minister of Christian Education, Trinity Lutheran Church - Castries, St. Lucia



Professor David Sellnow wrote an article entitled, “I Asked and They Answered” (*REACH!* Fall 2005) in which he asked about WELS congregations that are integrating youth into the mission of the church. This is something that our congregation does pretty well. However, we are not really a “typical” WELS church.

We are Trinity Lutheran Church, a WELS mission located in St. Lucia, an island in the Caribbean. Our congregation currently has about 120 members. Probably 50% of them are under the age of 24, which reflects the population of the island. We have two called workers, a Pastor and a Staff Minister.

We have two different groups for our young people. Our youth group is for youth ages 13-16. Christians in Action (CIA) is for those who are 17 and up. Each group meets twice a month with about 12 in attendance at each meeting. We do about an hour of Bible study and prayer and then have game time. We also do some outings.

Each group has a set of leaders. These leaders are elected by the rest of the group on the basis of spiritual qualities. There is no president, treasurer, etc. The leaders are chosen to be spiritual leaders of the groups. They plan, organize and make decisions, but they also go to visit prospective youth group member families, and they visit delinquent or troubled teenagers. (I will accompany them on these visits.) Part of their “job description” is also to set a positive example, pray for the other teens, and to “be there.” The leaders of the CIA also write and lead some of the Bible studies for the CIA group.

Twice a year, the youth write and lead congregational worship services. On a regular basis, we have male youth reading the Scripture lessons for worship, and leading the congregation in worship as liturgists. Most of the youth are also involved in some or all of the following ministries: evangelism visits – canvassing and follow-ups, church music (either midi or steel pan), Sunday school teaching, vacation Bible school teaching, and the “mundane” matters of church cleaning, set-up and maintenance. I can’t think of any teenager from church that isn’t involved in any of the above ministries. Everybody does something. Many do most things.

We train and equip the youth who serve in the following ways:

Bible study. Many of our youth come from non-Christian homes, so we study the Bible a lot – at youth group/CIA meetings, on outings, at leader meetings, Sunday morning Bible studies, etc. Many of these Bible studies are slanted toward Christian leadership.

CCTI. These letters stand for the “Caribbean Christian Training Institute.” It is kind of our own little MLC/WLS for the WELS churches of the English Speaking Caribbean (St. Lucia, Antigua, Grenada). Through the CCTI, youth can train for any number of “official” ministry positions – youth worker, evangelist, pastor, etc. Many of our teenagers are taking classes to prepare for full or part-time ministry.

Take them along. This simply means that the Pastor and I make it our goal to always take someone along as we do our ministry. Many times those who go along are teens. They can then learn about the practical aspects of ministry. I also try to just simply spend time doing “relational ministry” with the youth – going to the store, going fishing, running errands, etc.

Let them do it. We simply pray a lot and then take or send them out to do something. Can they really say or do anything worse than things I have said or done as a “professional” minister? (OK, don’t answer that.) We give them opportunities to do something significant for Jesus with their gifts, and sometimes we just step back and see what the Lord will do.

Our unique cultural/congregational setting perhaps allows us to plug youth into ministry more easily than back in the states.

There really is not much else to do. Like I said at the beginning, we are not a “typical” WELS church in a typical context. There just are not the many distractions and extra-curricular activities here that there are in the States. We have youth group on Friday nights, for

goodness' sake! There are no jobs for teens, no cars, and very few sporting activities. If you want "something to do," youth group stuff is sometimes the only decent option.

Set up of the congregation. Our congregation has many new believers who really "don't know any better." They pretty much accept the youth doing anything. "Oh, we have an 18 year old doing the benediction, I guess that must be fine . . ."

World mission focus. Our two main goals as a congregation are (1) evangelism and (2) worker training. We are in a world mission field. We must train locals for ministry. Therefore, we train youth for ministry.

Expectations. This kind of goes with the point above. But we simply hammer on it so much that it is just part of what we are. You are a Christian. You are a missionary. You are a minister. What ministry are you going to do? All of the youth simply accept the fact that being part of a congregation means that you do ministry – in whatever way God has blessed you to do it.

We have to. Like I said before, we are a very youthful church. If we didn't have the teens doing ministry, who would do it?

Community of believers. For some of the teens, the church family is the extent of their spiritual family. For some it is practically their "real" family. Christian community has been established. The youth encourage (prod, goad, persuade, and bug) each other to do the ministry. Our adults are also getting better at mentoring the youth and encouraging them in their ministries.

Doing ministry is fun. It is just simply "a rush" to do things for Jesus. I don't know how else to say it. They just like to do it.

Of course, youth are not adults, so a few practical points need to be made:

These are teenagers! Expect failure. Expect moodiness. Expect immaturity and unreliability. (Not too much different from adults sometimes!) But also don't be surprised when God uses the youthful energy and zeal of a teenager to work in a way that puts us "mature" Christians to shame.

Integration is a key. The rest of the congregation must be "up for it." The more Christian adults that you have around to encourage, mentor, and keep the vibe stable, the more youth you can train.

Figure it out. I know that the situation in St. Lucia is drastically different from that of stateside WELS churches, but that doesn't excuse any of us from training people for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13). In my estimation, there is

nothing more fulfilling for God's people than to use their gifts and abilities to serve and glorify the One who made them what they are – members, missionaries and ministers. So, figure it out, how can your congregation train and involve more teenagers in ministry?

Finally, with any ministry to and with youth, rely on God. God's Word is effective, just as he promises that it will be. Get that Word to the teens constantly and allow God to work. And don't forget to pray, pray and pray some more. Pray for your teens specifically. Pray for your congregation courageously. And pray for yourself that God would use you to be a trainer of his people.

God's blessings on your ministry and that of your youth!

Mr. Landwehr has developed a 10 lesson CCTI class entitled "Introduction to Youth Ministry." Although written with a Caribbean twist, it might be a resource worth using for personal or team growth in youth ministry. For a copy, please email Mr. Landwehr at <erikl@candw.lc>

Invite Your Congregation to "Walk in My World"

By Pastor Peter Panitzke - St. Paul's Lutheran Church - Muskego, Wisconsin

How is a family affected by a teenage pregnancy? How do you deal with friends or family who are homosexual? How do you show people the devastating effects of divorce on a family? Christians deal with these issues. But our worship services don't often deal with them in any depth.

That's why our ministerial staff thought the *Walk in My World* video series would be an excellent tool to use in our worship services. For four weeks in August, we walked in the world of real teenagers with real problems. We watched a five to six minute portion of the video series before the sermon, or interspersed three to four minute sections within the sermon. People could "see" the problems in the video segments. Then we used God's Word in the sermon to address the issues raised.

Why limit this great resource to a Bible study? Bring it into your worship service so that the whole congregation benefits from *Walk in My World*.



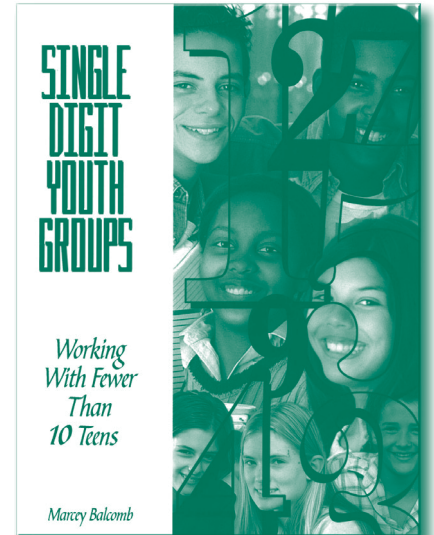
RESOURCES

Single Digit Youth Groups: Working with Fewer Than 10 Teens

by Marcy Balcomb / 2004 Abingdon Press (www.abingdonpress.com)
#0-687-74042-8 / Paperback / \$10.00

From the Web site: *Small churches and churches with small numbers of youth will be delighted that someone has finally written just for them! Marcey Balcomb helps them discover the joys and power of a single-digit youth group and provides the practical help they need!. Single-Digit Youth Groups opens with the scriptural basis for creating a ministry for even one youth, certainly two or three! Other chapters examine the benefits of a single-digit youth group, how to find adult leaders, starting or re-starting a single-digit youth group, creating a cooperative youth group ministry, and dealing effectively with safety issues. And there's more! Fully half the book is filled with awesome activities for single-digit youth groups (41 great activities, to be exact)! From her years of experience programming for and ministering with small youth groups with a wide range of ages, Marcey Balcomb has put together a collection of experiences that work effectively with as few as one or two youth and that easily engage nine. In addition, the book gives information about essential and helpful forms for use in a single-digit youth ministry. These make short work of administration so leaders can spend more time in ministry!*

Because many WELS congregations have smaller youth groups, I thought this book might be good to look over. I am not a Seminary-trained theologian, but I did not find much to worry about in this book. Most of it is very practical and would simulate youth leaders of smaller groups to think in new ways and also affirm them as they face the challenges of ministry to smaller groups. Chapter titles are...*Single-Digit Youth Groups: Founded in Scripture, Benefits of Single-Digit Youth Group, Adult Leaders, Starting or Restarting a Single-Digit Youth Group, Cooperative Youth Ministry, Safety Issues, 42 Great Activities for Single-Digit Groups, Reproducible Descriptions and Forms, Wrap-Up and Resources.* For \$10.00, you may want to give it a look.



Dr. Joel A. Nelson, WELS Youth Discipleship

Please, be discerning with non-WELS resources. Running all resources past your pastor would be a great idea, especially if you have any doubts.

Questions Can Show You Care

If you oversee others in youth ministry, show them you really care with these questions:

- How are you today, really?
- What are your personal goals and objectives?
- What's on your agenda?
- What are the key issues this week?
- What challenges are you facing?
- How do you intend to manage them?
- How can I support you or what do you need from me?
- How can I be praying for you?



REACH!

Youth Rally in the Caribbean

The ministry team at Trinity Lutheran Church in Antigua is planning a "Caribbean Youth Rally" in Antigua for August, 2006. The plan is to bring together Lutheran youth from Antigua, St. Lucia and Grenada (along with a few displaced Caribbeaners from Toronto) for a rally/ministry training experience.

Funds are needed, however, to help pay for the transportation to get the youth to Antigua. Teens in the Caribbean rarely have any kind of job and many come from disadvantaged families. The District Mission Board that oversees the ministry



effort in the Caribbean and WELS Kingdom Workers are hoping to be able to contribute, but about \$5,000 would still be needed.

Would your youth group or congregation want to make a Caribbean ministry connection and financially assist this exciting effort?

Think about it, pray about it, and if the Holy Spirit would move you to help, please contact Erik Landwehr for more information:

Staff Minister, Erik Landwehr
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Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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