



REACH!

Produced by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Commission on Youth Discipleship

It Becomes Cool - Imagine That!

by Pastor Luke Werre, Peace Lutheran Church – Sun Prairie, WI

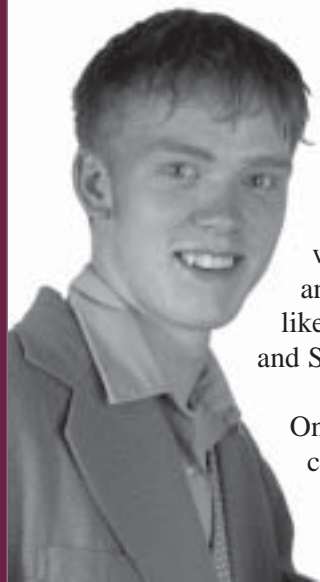
Some time back our chairman told me, “I’ve never seen the young people so involved in our church before.” I can’t boast that our youth “program” is flourishing. Perhaps to my/our shame, we were not even able to find volunteers in our congregation to lead it this fall. So what’s the involvement he was talking about? It was worship.

NO, NO, NO!!! Don’t take this to mean teens writing their own service or their own prayers or leading us in a way they weren’t divinely called to do. Nor is this a plug for Christian Contemporary Music (CCM). It’s actually an approach for involving young people within a liturgical context. Please allow me to explain...

Granted, in the context of the Gospel we are free as to the form of worship. But we aren’t living in a culturally religious vacuum either. We should not ignore that pop-evangelical* churches do what they do *on purpose* because of *what they believe*.** To try to mimic them could muddy the waters in the eyes of our own people and our visitors when really our teaching is drastically different –as different as the Law is from the Gospel! It’s not necessarily a bad thing if someone walks into your worship service and knows instantaneously that this is definitely not the local pop-evangelical church.

It’s also not a bad thing if they instantaneously recognize that the whole setting is altogether different from anything else they have experienced the rest of the week: different music, different behavior, a different way of dressing (especially the minister’s garb!), a different looking building that has no other practical purpose. Why? Because the Gospel itself is altogether different and foreign to this world. What God gives us through our minister and through Word and Sacrament is huge, outstanding, and unique. There’s nothing else like it. The liturgy is the gold filigree setting in which the jewel of Word and Sacrament is placed.

One way to impress this on the minds of young people is to teach the concept of reverence. Reverence is entirely a foreign concept to



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

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First Youth Ministry Conference is Success!

228 people, representing all 12 WELS Districts, attended the first ever national WELS Youth Ministry Conference (YMC) in Naperville, IL on September 17-19. The 228 were 59 pastors, 32 staff ministers, 27 Lutheran elementary or area Lutheran high school teachers, and 110 lay men and women.

The theme for the YMC was "Building from the Ground Up" with 27 different speakers from WELS and WELS



affiliated organizations and ministries, sharing ideas for how to engage and

impact youth from birth through high school as well as their parents. 20 WELS and WELS affiliated ministries also sponsored displays at the conference. The conference stressed the importance of partnering together in order to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the best possible ways. The next YMC will be held in 2006 in a more western part of the United States. Watch for details.

Videos of the four main plenary presentations below are available in a two video set from the WELS Youth Discipleship office (<cyd@sab.wels.net> or 414-256-3274). Cost: \$11.99 for all four presentations on two videos (includes S&H).

Building from the Ground Up: The Importance of Parents and Home

*Pastor John Boggs,
Dean of Students-Michigan Lutheran Seminary*

Building An Outreaching Ministry: The Importance of Sharing Jesus with Everyone

*Mr. Kevin Festerling, Teacher
St. Marcus Lutheran School-Milwaukee, WI*

Building a Ministry of Strong Partnerships: The Importance of Working Together

*Pastor Bruce Becker,
Administrator WELS Parish Services*

Building for All Eternity: The Importance of the Gospel in Today's World

*Pastor Ron Heins,
Director WELS Parish Assistance*

(*"It Becomes Cool..." cont. from page 1*)

them. By 7th grade they have never yet experienced it. (Have you seen most high school graduations lately?). But once you teach it and give them the reason why, they embrace it.

At our congregation we begin by handing the ushers' duties over to the confirmation students for the Wednesday evening Lenten services. But first I train them. I literally teach them how to walk properly, how to take the offering, how to greet people by looking in their eyes with a smile and a hello, how to make their corners when they turn, and, yes, even how to bow to the altar before and after they light the candles (recognizing that the altar symbolizes the body of Christ.). They are required to wear knee-length skirts and shirts with ties. No tennis shoes! We pursue excellence for our God. The elderly people are delighted. The parents love it and ask about it every year. Believe it or not, the kids love it too – their first taste of reverence!

If any sing or play instruments we involve them in parts of the liturgy on Sunday. They may sing the psalm refrain or if they're really talented the Verse of the Day. We often have a tambourine or something so simple as a trumpet just playing the melody of a hymn to accentuate one verse. Our motto is: It doesn't need to be complicated; it just needs to be done *well*. After a trial run, we will soon be scheduling a regular "assistant" to light candles and handle empty communion trays from boys 6th through 10th grade (In some circles they are called acolytes.).

Last Easter a group of high school students orchestrated on their own a brass ensemble. Our head organist helped them with the music. But without anyone suggesting it, on their own, they decided to wear black pants with white shirts and ties. The girls wore black skirts with white blouses.

Once the mindset is cultivated it creates its own momentum as younger students aspire to what they see their older counterparts doing, and the older students aspire to the excellence that the liturgy assumes.

It becomes *cool*. Imagine that!

* My own designation

** For example, they decidedly reject the Ministry of the Keys, and so they also decidedly reject the use of robes or pulpits –In their minds, the preacher is more like a facilitator helping you make your way to God rather than God's mouth actually speaking for God to forgive your sins.

**Talk to Pastor Werre about his article:
pwerre@peacelutheran-sp.org**

Check Out This Website: www.cpyu.org

The following description comes from the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding (CPYU) website and describes a resource that could be of value to you in your own ministry to teens. Of course, use it with discernment.

CPYU is a nonprofit organization committed to building strong families by serving to bridge the cultural-generational gap between parents and teenagers. At a time when an already confusing youth culture is changing quickly, CPYU helps parents, youth workers, educators, and others understand teenagers and their culture so that they will be better equipped to help children and teens navigate the challenging world of adolescence.

Founded in 1990, CPYU has developed an international reputation as a voice providing cutting-edge information, resources and analysis on today's youth culture. The mission of CPYU is to work with churches, schools, and community organizations to build stronger relationships between young people and those charged with helping them grow into healthy adulthood. This mission is accomplished by:

- ♦ Helping parents understand and respond to the complex world of their children and teens from a distinctively Christian point of view.
- ♦ Equipping teenagers to deal with the challenges of adolescence.
- ♦ Equipping parents and teens to respond to these challenges through a distinctively Christian world and life view.
- ♦ Raising the youth culture awareness of youth workers and educators, thereby helping them increase their effectiveness with parents, children and teens.

The Center for Parent/Youth Understanding fulfills this mission through a variety of resources:

- ♦ youthculture@today is a quarterly newsletter offering in-depth analysis on different aspects of contemporary youth culture and family dynamics. CPYU also offers a variety of other books, CDs and resources for use by parents, youthworkers, and educators.
- ♦ Our free bi-weekly "[Youth Culture e-Update](#)" contains current articles, studies, stats and trends on youth culture, along with pop culture quotes, song lyrics, and a relevant magazine print-ad discussion starter.
- ♦ CPYU also offers [seminars and conferences](#) for a variety of audiences on several topics related to youth culture and working with young people.
- ♦ Our [research](#) pages are updated regularly to provide parents, youth workers, and educators with the latest

information they need on current trends and a variety of topics related to youth culture.

- ♦ CPYU's archive of [articles](#) provides in-depth information on numerous topics relating to youth culture.
- ♦ Our [3D reviews](#) of various media are a helpful tool for parents, educators, youthworkers, and teens to help them becoming discerning media consumers.
- ♦ The [bibliography](#) area and the [links](#) pages on this site provide resources to help those working with young people research areas related to youth culture and youth ministry. The items found here are resources the Center has identified as useful tools for furthering understanding of today's youth culture.

Dozens of radio, television, and newspaper media outlets have relied on CPYU as a source of information and analysis on issues related to contemporary youth culture. In addition, CPYU regularly contributes to a wide variety of periodicals and journals targeting parents, educators, and youth workers. CPYU President Walt Mueller writes a regular column for Today's Father (a publication of the National Center for Fathering) and has written numerous articles for Parents of Teenagers, New Man, GROUP Magazine, Living with Teenagers, Youthworker Journal, and Junior High Ministry.

Taking VBS to the Nursing Home

Pastor Karl Heck (St. Timothy – Williamsburg, IA an ELS congregation) takes the CYD produced one-day VBS materials to nursing homes and convalescent care centers in his area. He finds that the lesson and related activities are the right level and length for the clients in these facilities.

Why not take Pastor Heck's idea and have your teens take the one-day VBS materials to similar facilities in your town? It would be a great way for teens to get their feet wet with teaching God's Word in a less intense environment. It would also touch the lives of some very wonderful people – teens and seniors alike.

One day VBS lessons and planning manuals are available from CYD for *The Birth of Jesus is Announced*, *Jesus is Born*, *Jesus is Risen*, *Walking with Jesus*, *Creation for Kids*, *Noah's Ark*, and *Let's Meet David*.





En-golf-ed in the Lord

by, Jason Wiechmann, Camp Phillip – Wautoma, WI

Try this youth group idea on for size: a teen golf outing where each hole would feature a short message about a stage of Jesus' life – from conception to ascension – as a way to share your faith with your unchurched friends. Was this idea the brainchild of a clever youth group leader? An innovation from a fresh-from-the-Seminary pastor? Actually, this creation comes from teens who attended our annual teen retreat at Camp Phillip last fall.

Each year our Fall Teen Retreat is attended by anywhere from 80-100 teens who are excited to try our ropes course, sing at the campfire, play zany games and learn more about their Savior in Bible studies that center around the weekend theme. We're always looking for Bible study ideas that teens will find appealing, so last year we created a game that let the teens tell us what interests them.

We called the game PRESENTATION. The teens were divided up into teams of 6-7 people. The goal of the game was that each team was to come up with an idea for a youth group outing that would combine an activity with a Bible study that was related to the activity. Each team would then present their idea to the rest of us. To make their presentations fun and exciting, the teams could "purchase" glue, markers, paper, props and such from the "Game Guru" (this is where the zany part comes in). The bartering that went on was quite hilarious. Some of the presentations were so elaborate, the teens ended up making some interesting deals with "Game Guru" to obtain extra supplies!

What we saw come out of those presentations was amazing! The teens put sincere and serious thought into Bible topics that they wanted to study, and blended them with activities that they were excited to try. The teens showed us that there are real fires of faith burning in their hearts, waiting for someone to give them an opportunity to bear fruit.

What were some of the other presentations? There was "FlowJoe", the nonconformist fish that showed the differences between Christian and worldly views on sex and marriage, drugs, excessive alcohol, and other hop topics. It coincided with a fishing trip! Then there was the "Paddling Through Living Water" presentation that featured a canoe trip to the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota (money was obviously no object here!). Each day of the canoe trip there would be a devotion about a Bible story that involved water. Another great idea was the "Rock Around the Clock" theme that took you on a rock climbing trip and talked about how God is our firm foundation, our rock, our fortress.

Try playing PRESENTATION with your teens. You get some neat ideas and also see your teens' desire to grow closer to their Lord in creative ways!

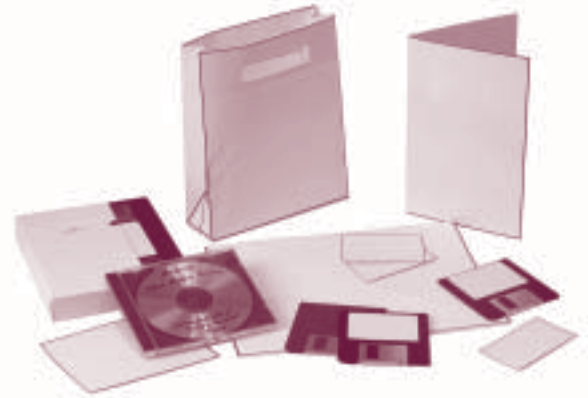
Jason Wiechmann is a Program Director at Camp Phillip in Wautoma, WI. You'll find him singing songs at campfire and playing Screaming Yellow Zonkers with campers year-around. To talk more with Jason about his ideas and his ministry call 920-787-1085 or email: <campphillip@vbe.com>.

You May Want to Watch the Results

The Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry is a three-year quantitative and qualitative study of those congregations that are offering exemplary ministry programs for youth. The study will look at congregations of different sizes, locations, and cultural and Christian traditions. Denominations include in the study are Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist, Evangelical Covenant, Assemblies of God, Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Methodists.

The study features objective survey instruments as well as in-depth, qualitative interviews to discover the essential traits and practices that make these congregations succeed where so many are struggling. The study purpose is to identify congregations that consistently establish faith as a vital factor in the lives of their youth, to discover what accounts for their effective approach to ministry, and to make the results widely known for the benefit of other congregations. Simply put, this is a study of those congregations that are successful in shaping the faith lives of youth and discovering what practices and key elements surround these youth ministries. <www.ExemplarYM.com> is the online communication tool for this study. Keep checking the results and see what you can learn.

Resource Recommendations



Volunteer Leadership Series (Books 1-6)

Group Publishing <www.grouppublishin.org>

Order #: 0-7644-2744-X \$79.00

In order to preview this series I set up a committee to read the books and evaluate them with an eye toward implementing them within our parish. Our committee concluded that the series did not seem to contain any doctrinal concern. However, the theme of the series is not doctrinal, but administrative. Did the series have some good ideas? Yes. Does it contain some great material? Yes. Is it practical? In some cases. So each of these questions is answered with some useful information. Some of the next questions might also be telling as well: Is it easily laid out? Not really. Is it succinct? Not necessarily. Is it worth the money? Maybe not.

If you have need for information on organizing volunteers, this is a very detailed, very laborious, very volunteer consuming, very time intensive and thorough program for implementation within your church. Having said that, it is exactly what many of our churches need. We need to get people involved. When people volunteer we need to use them. Our own church will take some steps to implement some of the thoughts and improve our volunteer ministry.

Pastor Steve Schmeling, St. Paul's Lutheran Church – Menomonie, WI

Rollercoaster: Surviving the Twists, Turns, and Drops

Zondervan Publishing <www.zondervan.com>

Order #: 0-310-25422-10 \$24.99

This is a five part Bible study resource for teen Bible classes. Included are introductions, questions, discussion starters, Bible verses to look up, and a 3-4 minute DVD clip to watch. On-line, customizable worksheets are also available and easy to access. Each of the five chapters has three levels: junior high, high school, and adult. There is no real doctrine taught, just discussion starter questions and Bible verses to look up. A leader would need to add Law-Gospel substance (a weakness in this product). The material is strong in getting groups into their Bibles and into discussing life applications. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being best, I'd give it a 6.

Mrs. Debbie Rothe, St. Matthew Lutheran School – Oconomowoc, WI

We're So Sorry!

As many of you know (and told us, thank you) the last issue of *REACH!* was mailed with various address and addressee errors. Here's what happened. The company that does the printing and mailing of the CYD newsletters had a breakdown with their mailing equipment, so they farmed out the mailing job to another company. That company totally goofed up the importing of the data from the electronic address files we provided and the crazy addressing of the newsletters occurred. We were furious (in a God-pleasing way, of course) and alerted the original company of the error and our upset. The address on the newsletter was correct, but the name of the receiver was incorrect. It appears, however, that most of the newsletters went to their correct addresses but with incorrect names on them. If you did not receive the fall issue of *REACH!* you can contact us and we will send you one as long as our overstock lasts. You can also download the issue at <www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship> "Newsletters" collection. Again we are so sorry. The printing/ mailing company assured us it would not happen again. If you're reading this, it must mean they kept their promise!

REACH!

Wanna See?

Registration information about the 2005 WELS International Youth Rally should be in your hands already. If not, contact us. You can also go to <www.welsyouthrally.net> or find the link in the "Links Lot" on the *LivingBold* website <www.livingbold.net>. Your teens could also contact Lea, Laura, or Crysta, the teen members of the WELS International Youth Rally Planning Committee.

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Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

