



YOUTH MINISTRY: MOVING BEYOND FUNDRAISING

Bake sales, car washes, rummage sales -- are you looking to move your congregation's youth ministry beyond fundraising?

Young adults in their 20s have the lowest attendance rate at worship in ELCA congregations and high school students rate just below them ("Comparing the Age of ELCA Attendees and the U.S. Population," ELCA, 2002). With this trend of young people leaving the church in high school and not coming back for a decade or more, there is a need for good youth ministry programs and it takes an entire church to accomplish this.

Culture is Key

Fundraising is important to go places and do things, but research shows that the key to great youth ministry is not where the youth go or what activity they engage in. An ecumenical study investigating qualities of exemplary youth ministry programs discovered that the congregations with the strongest youth ministries have a pervasive culture that values youth. A congregation that places importance on youth ministry, creates a sense of community for the youth, and supports strong leadership is more likely to have a good youth ministry program (Exemplar Youth Ministry study). Though more difficult to change than adding a new program, culture can dramatically impact your youth.

Help is Available

Congregations are not on their own when it comes to youth ministry. There are plenty of resources and support available through the ELCA.

The ELCA provides many ministry ideas on their Youth Ministries website. Resources include Reel World, discussion ideas about popular movies; Faith Lens, a weekly Bible study combining a current events story and scripture; Help Sheets, mini newsletters answering frequently asked questions

about youth ministry; and more. The ELCA Youth Ministry Network is also an useful network of youth workers. Beyond your computer, the ELCA offers special events like the Youth Worker Summit and the Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza to help train and support youth workers.

If you're looking for something a little closer to home, the synod-wide BLOC Heads (Building Lives on Christ) group meets regularly to offer support and resources to fellow youth workers.

Youth ministry can be a very exciting ministry, but it can also seem a little daunting at times. No matter your role in the congregation, you can help by contributing to a supportive culture and using or telling leaders about the helpful resources available.

FEATURED RESOURCE

- ELCA Youth Ministries - www.elca.org/youth
- BLOC Heads Meetings - www.semnsynod.org/events/meetings.html or contact the synod office at 507-280-9457 or 800-426-6376
- Exemplar Youth Ministry Study - exemplarym.com

MONTHLY BIBLE VERSE

We are a synod joined in Bible study. This Bible verse was selected by Harold Usgaard, bishop of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, for everyone in the synod to study.

"Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." 1 TIMOTHY 4:12



ABOUT OUR SYNOD

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod is a faith community of 130,000 baptized people in 184 congregations as well as related institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Its geographic area includes 15 counties in the southeastern corner of Minnesota.

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