

Drenched

The e-newsletter of your Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministry Team of the New England Synod.

Making a Difference:

Sometimes it's the "Little Things" ...*Steve Kennedy*

Jon (not his real name) was a good kid. He came from a family that seemed to have it together. His older brother demanded most of the families attention and Jon, who was a little short, just kind of floated through school. When Jon was in confirmation we saw him occasionally. I assumed it was just because his family lived out in the country and the drive was too much for them on a regular basis. It was also the reason why we figured he did not want to come to youth group. Jon eventually was confirmed and that was that as far as I figured. He would be similar to other kids whose parents brought them to church through confirmation and then who would slowly pull away from the church after that was done. More about Jon in a minute.....

Early on in my ministry, I decided to begin sending all the kids in my youth group **birthday cards**. I started doing this when I was volunteering. Fortunately, it was less expensive 15 years ago! The reason came more from my own youth.

I am an August birthday, my baby brother was born the day after Christmas, and my dad was born the day before Christmas. It always felt that at Christmas time, my brother's birthday was honored and remembered. Mine always felt like an after thought. And since school did not start until well after my birthday, no one really marked it the way they did for kids whose birthdays fell during the school year.

But, I had one aunt who to this day is unflagging in her remembrance of birthdays. She has faithfully sent me a card and update of their family every year. And it always gets here on time! I am not sure how she does it but she does. Her practice reminded me that **someone out there took joy in my being here**. This was the practice I wanted to emulate in my ministry.

(contd. Page 2)

Networking opportunities

Looking for a way to connect with other youth ministry leaders in your area? We are looking for people who are willing to host and invite others from your region/city/area to a time of Bible Study and fellowship with your peers. We have two groups forming currently.

Rhode Island Group (Woonsocket area)

Contact: Kris Bacon
(bacon12@cox.net)

New Hampshire (Nashua area)

Contact: Dan Skibba
(dmskibba@adelphia.net)

Contact Steve Kennedy

(stev4uth@hotmail.com) if you are interested in forming one of these groups in your area.

CHECK OUT THE SYNOD'S YOUTH MINISTRY WEBSITE: www.getdrenched.org.

The site should be up and running soon with more information coming this fall.

Looking for news and information from throughout the synod? Check out the congregational "Care Packet" at <http://www.nesynod.org/care-package.html>.

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IDEAS BOX

With each e-newsletter we will try to include some helpful information for your ministry from all of you! So we thought starting with that age old question about what to do for Bible Study might be a good way to get started.

Q: Help! I need to put together a Bible study group for my High school youth. Where can I get something that will help me with this?

Send your answers to Steve at stev4uth@hotmail.com, put the words "IDEA BOX" in the Subject line.

Have a question about ministry? Send that along to!

ELCA YOUTH MINISTRY EVENT Tampa, FL, February 1-5, 2007

Extravaganza 2007 Registration is open! You can now go to the Extravaganza page and click on the "Register Now" link to register and pay online, or to download a paper information and registration form that you can mail or fax in.

This year, we're gathering in Tampa, Florida from Feb. 2-5, 2007 (Intensive Care Courses run Feb. 1-2) under the theme "Open House". There are going to be great general sessions with phenomenal speakers and musicians, dynamic workshops and great networking opportunities. Program information can be found on the web site, as well as info on cost, travel discounts and more. The program isn't complete yet, and we keep adding to the web site every week, so be sure to check back.

Plan now on joining us in Tampa in February!

http://www.elcaymnet.org/index.cfm?PAGE_ID=52

"Little Things" cont.

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Fast forward a few years to my first call as a full-time youth minister. I'd like to say it was easy, but it was a lot of hard work. No matter what programming problems might have existed, the first thing I did do was get all the names of the kids from the church with their addresses and birthdays. I even added visitors and friends as we went along. This is where **Jon's story** comes back in to the picture. You see, even when Jon was done with confirmation, he still got a card from me for his birthday with a little handwritten note reminding him that someone out there was still thinking about him. As the congregation went through a pastoral transition, it became clear it was time for me to move on. The problem was we had a large regional gathering to attend that year. Still, God's timing was good. In the midst of planning for our group to attend, a call from another congregation appeared and I accepted. My last event with the youth group would be this regional gathering. It was somewhat of a surprise to see that Jon had decided to come along for this event. I was overjoyed. Maybe now he would feel like he belonged. Maybe the other kids would help bring him into the group even more. Off we went. (contd. Page 3)

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5 Keys to Balanced Youth Ministry

Most Youth Ministries spend a lot of time wondering what to do with youth once they come to church. And so a lot of what happens is centered around creating "fellowship" activities for youth. That is just one of five things needed for a healthy youth ministry.

Worship, Education, Stewardship, Outreach, and Fellowship are all important to a healthy youth ministry.

Steve and the team will be helping to unpack these in the coming months. But to get started, start asking yourself what each of those things means to you in your ministry. How are they expressed? What are ways to insure you have a little of each in your ministry?

LITTLE THINGS (contd.)

On the way home from the event, the kids had a little send off and thank you for me. As we were headed back to our hotel rooms, **Jon came over and handed me an envelope.** "Please, promise me you won't read this until you leave," he said.

I was a little suspicious, but I agreed thinking that maybe it was just hard for him to share his feelings and did not want to be embarrassed.

In the midst of packing and moving I had put Jon's letter in my pile of mail to look at once I arrived in my new place. A few weeks went by before I finally opened it.

Jon's letter was a **reminder** of how we never know as youth workers **how big our impact could be.** It turned out that earlier that year Jon's brother had gotten into trouble again. The family spent most of the time dealing with that and as Jon's birthday approached he realized that there was not going to be a party for him, or much else for that matter. Jon became very depressed and despondent. He decided that he would help the family on his birthday by planning to kill himself that day. On his birthday, unbelievably low and sad that he had been forgotten, Jon for some reason went to the mailbox. There, in the box, was a letter for him from the church. It was not like a regular envelope and he figured it was a card. So he opened what was my birthday card for him that day.

This is what Jon revealed to me in his letter. He mentioned how he would miss having me as his youth leader. But, I will never forget his last sentence: "**Thanks for saving my life.**"

God is good and sometimes even in the midst of our own self-concerns and worry about youth group planning, **the smallest act of grace can change the world.**

I was just the instrument. You too are **visual reminders of the grace of God.** Our work with young people may rarely feel like we are saving anything, but **small seeds sometimes can grow into overpowering love.**

Suggested Reading: **The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry** by Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster (Upper Room, 1998). An inexpensive paperback that helps you discover ways to a richer, more spiritual connection for the young people in your ministry.

Also, *The Lutheran Link*, can be viewed on-line at <http://www.nesynod.org/thelink.html>.

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PROJECT CONNECT!!

Help **connect your graduating high school students** to a Lutheran presence at college. Enter names into the **Project Connect** database, www.elcaconnect.com or www.projectconnect.org. These names will be forwarded to a Lutheran campus pastor at the student's school, if a Lutheran ministry is present at the school, so that they can be in touch once the school year starts. (While Project Connect is intended to link students specifically with an interest in ministry or other church leadership roles, the database is being expanded for more general use, and students will not be solicited for Project Connect purposes unless you specifically indicate their interest.) Any rostered clergy or parish administrator can request a login and password for the database - we especially encourage you to update it each year, at graduation time! For more information, contact Carl Sharon, carl.sharon@yale.edu. Thanks!

*"When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God."
---Acts 4:24*

The Lutheran Youth Organization of the ELCA invites you on Wednesdays
at 4:24 pm
no matter what time zone to pray

Daily conversation with God is important. Based on Acts 4:24, the 4:24 prayer campaign is designed to provide youth and others with a time of intentional prayer and reflection. Whether it is lifting the concerns of our own hearts or joining together in a unified word, we encourage each other to pray. Thus, at 4:24 pm on Wednesdays, no matter what time zone, you are invited to stop and pray.

JOB POSTINGS IN NE SYNOD

For other ELCA postings go to the ELCA Youth Ministry Network Site:
http://www.elcaymnet.org/index.cfm?PAGE_ID=753

Parish Life Coordinator

A congregation is seeking a part-time staff person to serve as Parish Life Coordinator. This person will coordinate and direct the youth, fellowship and education ministries of the congregation. Candidates must have a strong Christian commitment; experience with youth, education and/or family ministries; demonstrated organizational and planning skills; and an ability to work with and inspire people. For more information or to apply contact Concordia Lutheran Church 40 Pitkin Street, Manchester, CT. (Concordia is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.) Phone 860.649.5311. E-mail clcmanch@aol.com.

CONGRATULATIONS to new parents Nick & Rev. Liz Eide. Rev Eide is one of the co-chairs of the Drenched Team. They are happy parents to twins Jackson and Sophia!

This newsletter is e-mailed to the New England Synod's volunteers in children, youth, and young adult ministries as well as rostered leaders in the synod. Feel free to forward this email to others on your team!