

# YMI Newsletter January 2012

Sunday, 29 January 2012 00:00

## An Inside Look

You might think that Jonathan Nash is the poster child for YMI. His picture appears pretty early on the web site slide show. He was quoted in last month's newsletter (of course with a picture). And, he is our featured speaker at next week's dessert fund raiser. For that matter, you also might think he is our only student! Well he isn't our only student and he isn't the poster child. But, he does have a story that is worth telling.

Jonathan grew up in Naples, Florida, not Buffalo, New York. Somehow, I confused his story with someone else's and wrote in our fundraising program that Jonathan was a native of the frigid northeast. I am reminded of that mistake often. He is not a northerner by any stretch of the imagination.

He likes the outdoors, the warm kind for which Naples is known. In fact, he works part time in the outdoors at the Audubon of Florida Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. An avid hunter and lover of nature, this is a perfect fit for Jonathan.

Most recently ABC ran a series on the work being done at the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Jonathan reminds me of quieter more subdued Crocodile Hunter. Check out the news clip. <http://www.abc-7.com/story/16103927/2011/11/22/invasive-plants-endanger-fragile-ecosystem>



When he isn't in the swamp he is working at Cornerstone UMC in Naples. He began two years ago sharing the part time youth minister job with a friend. That amounted to seven hours per week for Jonathan. Soon after they started, his friend resigned and Jonathan took over his hours. Feeling ill prepared, his church enrolled him in YMI. He became the first part-time youth minister to enter our program.

As with most second career youth ministers, Jonathan had no idea what he was getting himself into. It looked like a pretty easy job from his viewpoint as a volunteer within the ministry. Things changed when he began sitting in the pilot's seat.

He was excited, yet, reluctant when he first started YMI. There are always a number of question marks that linger over the heads of those who simultaneously begin their role as a youth minister and enter into YMI. They have this "What am I doing?" look that communicates anxiety, excitement, confusion, and relief. Some of that never goes away. It just becomes tempered with time. But, time also brings clarity.

After two years, Jonathan's role as a youth minister has become clearer. It is obvious in his approach to his ministry and the quality of work he does in YMI. He is beginning to get the results he had hoped for when he began.

By the way, he also fulfills the role of husband and father to three children, one who is nearing graduation from high school. Jonathan never questions God's role in his life. He loves his family and is grateful for the opportunity to work in two areas he loves.

Maybe Jonathan is the poster child for YMI. I don't mean that his situation is typical of others in our program. It is not. Possibly, because it isn't typical states a value we have at the Youth Ministry Institute.

We work with youth ministers and churches in their own unique context. Maybe that statement is worthy of a poster.

## Most Recently

"I thought you couldn't begin YMI in January". I could hear the critics.

Hmm. All right. I guess there wouldn't be many critics. But, I'm sure it raises some questions. At least, it does for me!!! How will this work?

Carolyn Johnson from Hobe Sound is our first to start in January. She fills a position left vacant by the previous youth minister who was enrolled in YMI for a few months. Since we had already begun the process of scheduling assessments, lining up coaching, etc. we decided to have her begin the instructional training in January.

Carolyn makes for a great guinea pig. She is positive and willing to do what it takes to be a great youth minister. Without a proper orientation, she was thrown into her first YMI retreat the day after she began her job. Talk about overwhelming. She had a stack of books, a packet describing our processes to assimilate in a very short period of time. What would be overwhelming to some other person, only seemed to encourage Carolyn that this experience was going to be worth it.

She joins David Killingsworth of Winter Park, who is on a three year program as our first to join the class of 2014!!! It feels good to get an early start on building the next class of youth ministers.

## Partner Highlight

Jon Grenz of Palm Beach Atlantic University has begun teaching our systematic theology intensive. Jon's background in youth ministry is extensive. It is exciting to have him included in our faculty which includes professors from Asbury Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary and Valencia College.

Our intent is to give our students a well rounded view of Christian theological thought so that they may more adequately form their own theological beliefs. And, just as importantly, youth ministers need to identify the power in the words they are using. Without an adherence to this, youth ministers can be sloppy in their language thereby communicating conflicting theological view points. This serves only to confuse young people in forming their own perspective God and how God operates in the world.

This semester will be a proving ground regarding theological formation. Already the class is active with comments, opinions and questions that allows me to witness great minds at work developing great thoughts!!!

## Coming Soon

### Annual Dessert Fund Raiser

There is less than a week until our annual dessert fundraiser!!! Our goal is to introduce what the Youth Ministry Institute is accomplishing all over the state of Florida.

If you live in Central Florida, invite someone to be your guest. Feel free to make your reservations by clicking on the web site [www.yminstitute.com/events](http://www.yminstitute.com/events) or by emailing me at [atsteve@yminstitute.com](mailto:atsteve@yminstitute.com).

Thanks for helping us fill the room!

THE YOUTH MINISTRY INSTITUTE

*Cordially invites you to attend*

# ANNUAL DESSERT FUNDRAISER

*February 6, 2012  
6:45 to 8:30pm*

First United Methodist Church • 142 East Jackson Street, Orlando, 32801

*Please visit our website [www.yminstitute.com/events](http://www.yminstitute.com/events) to learn more about YMI.  
Please RSVP at the website or to [steve@yminstitute.com](mailto:steve@yminstitute.com) by January 24, 2012*

## Final Word

### From the YMI Guy's Blog

My dad's birthday was yesterday. He would have turned 90 if he were living. That concept is difficult for me to get my head around especially since he died just six weeks shy of his 52<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

Another momentous birthday took place the day before my dad's. My friend, Ian, turned 50. I can't believe I have friends that old!!! I called Ian, who lives near Calgary, Alberta, on his birthday. We

haven't seen each other in decades. But, we have talked on the phone almost once a year over the last decade.

Ian and I recalled the special nature of our friendship. There were actually three of us that hung out together for about a six month period beginning in the summer of 1975, some 18 months after my dad died. I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and my mom and I were recreating our lives in a suburb of Kansas City. We lived in a two bedroom duplex that was on the border of a big highway construction project. Ian lived on the other side of the construction project, an area we called "The Field".

The Field became our playground. There were mounds of dirt and an expanse of rugged terrain that made it, at the same time, mysterious and safe for young teenagers. We filmed movies, made up games, built forts and dams. And, when we weren't in the field we were creating other methods of play. There were no board games for us. Electronic gaming hadn't been invented, yet. We were still a year away from "pong".

We would spend hours at night on a hill we called "Thepid" gazing at the stars, wondering if life existed beyond our tiny little home. In fact, we began asking a lot of the big questions about life during this period of time. It was a time of rapid inquisitiveness and exquisite creativity.

And, Ian drove it all.

He had an unquestioned philosophy of life. I wouldn't say it was spiritual, but it bordered on that. He lived into a moral framework of how the world should operate. And, if we didn't agree, we weren't cool. Ian was his own person, choosing not to hang around one particular group at school, but rather be his own person that had friends in multiple groups.

There was a dress code, however. Flannel shirts with unbutton cuffs, bell bottom Levis faded (because of use, not because they were purchased that way), and a jeans jacket, no matter how cold it was. In the summer, we wore cutoff jean shorts, no shoes and no shirt. Again, if you didn't dress the part, you weren't cool.

It sounds like a cult, right? I guess in some ways, it may have been at least cliquish. Except the moral code was always the most important. Others were treated with respect. It was important to think about the questions of life and not necessarily come up with any of the answers.

So, on Tuesday night, after wishing him a happy birthday, I thanked Ian for saving my life. He didn't know it at the time. But, I was a boy looking for male leadership in my life. All of the sudden Ian was there. He wasn't perfect. But, in retrospect, he filled a void in a big way. It isn't just coincidence for me that his birthday and my dad's are one day and 40 years apart.

After six months Ian moved to Chicago. Luckily his influence didn't leave with him. We wrote long letters (in the days before email) to each other for years after that. It was reminiscent of sitting at Thepid, talking about all of the big ideas that existed in the universe.

So, happy birthday, Dad. Happy birthday, Ian.