

YMI Newsletter

2012 No. 2

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An Inside Look

This time of year I'm on the road quite a bit. I take two to three day trips in one direction visiting with youth ministers and pastors, telling them about the extraordinary benefits of enrolling in the Youth Ministry Institute. At times I feel like I'm selling some sort of amazing moisturizing cream that I see on those hour long infomercials. It really works. Look at this brochure of happy youth ministers!

So, it is with a tinge of dread that I embark on my trips. But only a tinge. What motivates me most is meeting new people and hearing their stories. It is fascinating to me how many different ways people have come to be youth ministers. There is the single dad who started volunteering in the ministry a few years before the youth minister left. There is the guy who didn't become a Christian until college and has all of the sudden found himself leading a youth group without any point of reference. There is the youth minister that is serving at his church where his youth minister is the associate pastor and the associate pastor's youth minister is the senior pastor. There is the youth minister who stopped being a youth minister only to return to her calling. I could go on and on. Every story is different. They are all fascinating.

This time, I find that I'm not feeling like I'm selling moisturizing cream as much. Maybe it is because I'm walking through open doors instead of showing up in churches where I haven't been invited (a strategy I had to use early on because nobody knew who I was and what the Youth Ministry Institute was all about).

In fact, this has been a really good season of visits. I have two trips left and then some day trips to visit with people who I missed. Already, we have two signed up for the fall and another three verbal commitments. That is huge! There are another dozen on my "hot prospect" list. And, I have done a few pre-hiring consultations for churches that are in the process of searching for a youth minister. It has never been this good this early. Again, I'm praying for ten new students. Our capacity is 12 each year.

Even more importantly, I'm visiting with the youth ministers who have completed YMI. There are a number of them now. It is great to see what was once theory (we hypothesized that YMI would work) is now in fact working for youth ministries all across the state.

Most Recently

Nearly 120 people enjoyed delicious strawberry shortcake (and many other morsels of delicious food) at the annual YMI Dessert Fundraiser on February 6th. Three youth groups competed in a strawberry shortcake decorating contest. Youth and youth ministers gave some incredible testimonies about youth ministry and the Youth Ministry Institute. And, we raised nearly \$25,000!!! We are on our way to our goal of \$44,000. Enough words. Enjoy the pictures.





Partner Highlight

I never considered the **Simply Youth Ministry Conference (SYMC)** a partner until this year. It was a conference we attended and liked quite a bit. They were good to our group and even asked me to teach a four hour course. So, it was a nice benefit.

This year was different. I have been to 5 of the 6 conferences they have offered, missing the first year. I have seen it grow from several hundred to nearly 3000 participants. I have led an affinity (or connect) group for those new to youth ministry every year I have gone. When I arrived this year, there was an overwhelming welcome for me and our group of 21 YMI students, alumni, coaches and friends. It was pretty extraordinary. At every turn we were greeted and recognized.

The conference attempts to connect people in meaningful relationships while, at the same time, providing professional instruction and inspiring worship. Every workshop is hosted around round tables so that conversation is encouraged and expected. The instructors are not just people out to sell their books (though some are authors). They are available for continued conversation after the workshop has ended.

I realized that their DNA is our DNA. Developing supportive and encouraging relationships is part of learning the skills needed to be an effective youth minister. The organizers of this conference genuinely care about YMI and, more importantly, each youth minister that attends.

I think they knew it all along. I'm a little slow sometimes. But, it is with great pleasure that I recognize SYMC as one of our partners.

Coming Soon

Certification Ceremony

You are invited to the culmination event of our two-year program. Hear the testimonies of those that have completed all the requirements of the Youth Ministry Institute.

You are invited to attend

THE YOUTH MINISTRY INSTITUTE

CERTIFICATION CEREMONY

APRIL 14, 2012 · 1:00 P.M.

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, CHAPEL

142 EAST JACKSON STREET

ORLANDO, FLORIDA



Final Word

From the YMI Guy's Blog

I've been playing with a metaphor lately. It's not a new one. But, I still like it. I probably like it because it tickles my fascination with architecture - blueprints, construction and the finished product.

A few years ago, my wife gave me an architecture program for my computer. Within 6 months I had seven different renovation plans for our home. Shortly thereafter, during a three month remodel of our pool that drove my wife crazy, I realized that we would never remodel our home, thus all my plans only served as entertainment.

We have since moved into a newer home that doesn't need any remodeling. I threw away the computer programs last week. I guess I need a new outlet. So, I turn to the metaphor.

Imagine that you are in a room. It can be large or small, full or empty. The important image is that you are standing in one place in the room, looking at everything that is in it. That place provides you with a perspective of the room.

In our new home, we are hanging pictures. In fact, my wife created this giant picture wall with nearly 30 picture frames. When I stand in one place in the room, I get one view of the wall, with the front door in the background. From another point in the room, I'm looking down on the wall from the stairs. Each view of the same wall, gives me a different perspective of the room. If I move my eyes around the room

from that same perspective I can see some things more clearly from that point in the room than I can from another point in the room.

Our perspective is singular. We tend to see the world from where we stand.

Take any political or social issue. State your opinion and why you think that. Now, try to move around the room. Difficult, huh?

For some reason, people in our culture believe if we change our perspective, it communicates a weakness in our belief system or an inability to make definitive decisions on things that are important in life. Hogwash.

It is the ability to move around the room that opens up a world of possibilities. Yes. Cause and effect become more complicated. The room goes from being black and white to a multi-color status with one color bleeding into another.

And, when I begin to move around the room in my home, I realize that while the front door is closed, there are three other doors in the room and one may be open, thereby leading me into another room with even greater possibilities and, yes, a completely new perspective.

Since I began the Youth Ministry Institute six years ago I have been walking through a lot of open doors. Early on, I banged my head on a few closed doors, too, trying to get through. But, I quickly realized that God wanted me to move around the room and only walk through open doors.

About the same time as YMI came into being, my wife and I started praying a prayer when we came to a crossroads regarding a family decision. It went something like this, "Dear God, make it stinking obvious!" That prayer became a centering prayer for us. It centered us on God, while we changed our perspective. The number of open doors we have walked through in the last six years are too numerous to count. Our friendships are deeper and broader. Our sense of purpose is clearer.

I guess I'm having fun with the architecture of my life, knowing that I'm not the designer. I simply get to wander around that which has been constructed for me. Oh, I'm still making decisions. The big decision was to move off of the spot in the first room.