

YMI Newsletter

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An Inside Look

I have always heard about the dynamic of the board room. I guess I had in my mind that the board room contained ultimate power and had the potential to wield it indiscriminately creating carnage where it pleased.

That has not been my experience in our board room.

Our board of directors meets quarterly. And, I actually look forward to the meeting. It is for sure that I come out of the board room with more work than when I entered. But, I also come away from the meeting energized. Our board is active and always appears to be just as passionate about empowering youth ministers as I am. As they witness the results, they become more energized. Our board members don't burn out. They gain steam and tend to finish in a flurry making their mark on the Youth Ministry Institute. 50% of what we do now is because of an idea that was birthed at a board meeting.



100% of what we do now is influenced by the members of our board of directors. I am smart enough to know that with every good idea that I have, it must go through a refining process. The first step in that process is getting board member's input. A good idea always comes out better after a meeting.

Our core competency assessment came from Debby Manuel, a founding board member. We now have a celebration at each local church the day after our youth ministers are certified. Board members came up with the idea and travel all over the state to celebrate with churches on a Sunday morning. Our new pre-hiring service is being refined by board member input. These are but a few examples.

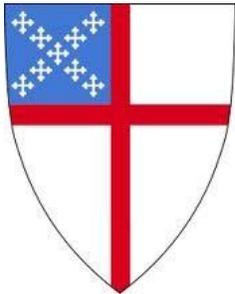
Each June (now May) our new board members join and those that are completing their three year term rotate off. This year I gave a short synopsis of each board member rotating off and what each brought to the Youth Ministry Institute. Kim Lee, a lawyer, pushed us to incorporate and file for our non-profit status. That was a huge step. Suzette Dohany, a college professor, helped us rewrite all of our courses with learning outcomes and evaluative tools to help us to measure whether we were accomplishing those outcomes. This proved to be monumental as we submitted our curriculum for review with Southwestern College. She also teaches a personality temperament class which has become part of our YMI language. Jane Cole chaired our board and teaches an organizational class that helped youth ministers learn some new tools, aiding especially those that didn't feel like they were skilled in organization. And, Anne Taylor, the only six year member of our board, leant her expertise as a youth minister and teacher and coach of youth ministers. Her insight and on-the-ground work with our youth ministers is incredible. Her contributions are numerous.

It is apparent. Each board member leaves their mark on YMI. So, yeah, our board room is dynamic. However, there is no power struggle because, after all, our mission is to empower others, the youth ministers we serve.

Most Recently

The new class of youth ministers is continuing to form. Next week I will make all of my final calls to see who among the ten fence sitters will join the six who have already signed up. There are only six slots left.

In addition, there are a number of churches who have yet to hire someone. Some of these have indicated an interest.



But, the most exciting development in the new class happened a month ago. Joshua Joseph from Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Melbourne applied to be part of the Youth Ministry Institute. JJ is our first Episcopalian. I'm not sure why it took so long to break through the denominational glass ceiling. But, it did.

Anne Taylor, an Episcopalian youth minister, is one of our founding board members. Eric Moulton is in charge of the youth ministry for the Central Florida Diocese. He just rotated on to our board. But, never before did we have an Episcopalian youth minister involved as a participant in YMI.

This last spring I was more intentional about connecting with a variety of churches across the state. I am hopeful that this is the beginning of a great trend.

Partner Highlight

Southwestern College



In June the Southwestern College undergraduate council affirmed the extra work YMI youth ministers are doing in their course work by granting an additional 18 hours of credit for those that complete the two year course. For the past several years our graduates have been eligible for 15 hours of redeemable credit at Southwestern College. Now they will be eligible for 33 credit hours. Students would also need to complete an additional 30 hours of online course work with Southwestern College to be eligible for an undergraduate degree from them.

The graduate council meets in September to consider a similar proposal. YMI is petitioning for an increase of 12 credit hours to match the four core theological intensive courses we added two years ago. This would make YMI graduates eligible for 27 hours of redeemable credit at Southwestern College towards a masters degree. The masters degree program requires 36 hours. This, as well, would be a significant incentive for our youth ministers to complete a degree.

David Benson, a 2008 graduate of YMI, was the first person to complete his undergraduate degree with Southwestern College. In the fall, Jeremy Knight is enrolling in the graduate program. Two other YMI alumni plan to enroll soon. We are hoping that the flood gates begin to open because of this new agreement as we continue to empower youth ministers to become skilled and effective leaders. A degree or two always helps!

Coming Soon

Pre-Hiring Services

Churches are now calling me - out of the blue!

I didn't realize when we began YMI how long it would take to develop a strong enough reputation to get churches to begin to call me. I had no frame of reference. I beat the pavement pretty hard - traveling the state every year talking to as many people who will make an appointment with me.

The last three years, I have received a large number of referral phone calls. The people making the reference to these callers have been someone that I know.

This year I have received a number of calls from churches who have only heard about our reputation, often several times removed from anyone I know. The tipping point came this spring when the calls started coming from multiple denominations. All of the calls were from pastors asking for help in locating their next youth minister. We offer a two hour pre-hiring consultation. But, we don't have a data base of youth ministers looking for a job from which to draw.

At lunch one day with a youth minister friend, we began to consider the possibility of offering a more comprehensive service that involved a one day consultation with a church searching for a youth minister using focus groups to determine the "best fit". We would then become the gathering point for all the resumes, screening applicants as we went, based on the criteria set at the consultation. During our culling process we would conduct short interviews to determine matched values and theology, check references and, ultimately, use our core competency assessment to evaluate the final list of candidates.

All of this data would contribute to a portfolio on each candidate that we would deliver to the church so that they could conduct the final round of interviews. The church would hire their new youth minister from the five to seven portfolios provided to them by us.

Throughout the process we would coach the church on how to effectively conduct a search, since many churches don't do this very often.

We also wouldn't be restricted to Florida when providing this service since everything, except for the onsite consult, would be done electronically.

A service such as this will help give churches what they are asking. It will also create a data base of youth ministers for YMI. That way I'll have a better answer for when churches call me - out of the blue.

Final Word From the YMI Guy's Blog

Broken

Broken things frustrate me.

Everything in my house seems to break at once. About four months after we moved in, three of the four light bulbs in my kitchen burned out within a week. What's the big deal, right? Well, we have vaulted ceilings in all of our common rooms downstairs. I had to buy a pole with a suction cup on the end of it to grip the light. To change the bulb I climbed a ten foot ladder, extended my pole, locked the suction cup onto the bulb and turned it ever so gently so as to not lose the effect of the suction. And, then, when I successfully unscrewed the bulb, I had to maintain suction and balance so the bulb didn't come crashing to the floor. My first attempt nearly ended in disaster with the bulb somehow falling into my free hand. I repeated this process two more times wishing that light bulbs wouldn't burn out in the first place.

Last month it was the toilets. How do all the toilets in my house break at the same time? I'm sure next month it will be something else.

Broken things always need fixing.

I have come to realize that people are like this. This can be frustrating when one works with people as I do in the church. I have joked most of my career that ministry would be great if it weren't for all the people. I have a couple of other more productive epiphanies - all joking aside.



Everybody is broken. I used to not think this. I would hold someone in high regard and think, "If I could be like him (or her) I would have my act together." It only takes knowing someone well to really begin to appreciate the fact that there is brokenness in their lives, too. They don't have it "all" together. Every person struggles with their own history, their own present and their own future.

The other day I was in a conversation with a group of people and they were singing the praises of a couple I know, telling everyone how much they admire them. Well, I guess I am a party pooper. I affirmed the accomplishments that this person deemed noteworthy and then I added, "I know these people well. Trust me. They are just like us and struggle with their own stuff."

Even my wife used to wonder how other people kept their house so clean and neat. She would be frustrated by the apparent messiness of our house (note: our house looks pretty good most of the time). The truth was that these people cleaned up for guests. In between visitors, they fought messiness, too.

That brings me to my second observation. We are really good at hiding our brokenness. A friend of mine once said that we have become sophisticated at hiding our pain. A baby cries when they are hurt or need something. As we grow older we have learned to mask those things well, often times hiding when we need to be found the most.

That brings to mind the obvious sorts of brokenness - the ones for which we have developed support groups to deal with - alcoholism, drug addiction, sex abuse, etc. However, these are, more often than not, symptoms of something else that is broken. Until we deal with the depth of our brokenness, we never really solve what our body does to cope with it.

If we dig a little deeper into ourselves, we will also discover some minor breaks. I have had chronic back pain for two years. Some days I don't feel it. Other days it immobilizes me (kind of). I still play basketball. I just do it with pain. I keep telling myself that I will go to the doctor to get a diagnosis. I don't. It is brokenness I choose to live with even though there may be a solution for it.

There are minor emotional breaks that we all have. Whether it is a relationship with a friend, family member or acquaintance, these breaks can continue to cause us pain - pain we don't talk about, pain we simply play through.

My last observation is similar. Some people are pretty open with their brokenness. This can be refreshing to those that value honesty and transparency. It can also be a source of discomfort for others. It is actually a relief to the person that is sharing.

However, there are some that never concede, even though those around them can see their brokenness. These are the people for whom I am most concerned. They tend to keep people at arms length, convincing themselves that because of the distance, others won't see what is really wrong in their life. That is true to an extent. Other people aren't able to name what is wrong. However, they know that something is wrong.

People are broken and broken things always need fixing. And, it is our willingness to be fixed that allows us to feel whole once again.