

YMI Newsletter

2012 No. 5

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An Inside Look

I have been writing for three issues about the prospects of this incoming class. Let me remind you, we have a two year program. So, recruiting one class of youth ministers feels very fleeting as they seem to graduate from our program soon after they began. Maybe it is my advancing age and the recognition that time simply speeds up. It doesn't slow down. I do, however. That would be a topic for another time - one that I am preoccupied with.



Back to our new class. Let me start with the last. Jesus does make mention that the last shall be first. I have known the last two youth ministers that agreed to be in YMI for several years. They are both great at bantering - talking about nothing with a thin threaded stream of consciousness. For this reason alone I felt YMI was a good fit for each of them. Seriously, I have pursued these two youth ministers to the point of feeling like I was stalking them. Dave and Willie are on multi-youth minister staffs and are the same age. They both grew up in the

church where they serve. There the similarities end. But, they are a great final addition to this extraordinary class.

James and Josh were the next to last pair to sign up for YMI. They, too, are about the same age as Willie and Dave (mid to late 20s). James chose to be homeless for a time and runs a separate non profit called Clothe Your Neighbor. Josh grew up and worked in the YMCA. Both are creative and engaged in seeking to be great youth ministers.

I already told you about JJ, our first Episcopalian youth minister, in the last newsletter. He happens to work in Melbourne, three blocks from James and five minutes over the intracoastal waterway from Jess, our youngest youth minister at 22. Jess also played football for the Gators for a short time after high school. These three plus Willie makes four youth ministers from Melbourne. This is the first time we have had so many from such a small geographic area.

Brian is our elder statesman at 34. He is married and has kids. He also is a full time fire medic and teaches first aid 20 hours per week. That makes him the fourth YMI participant to have another full time job while serving as a youth minister for his church.

Andrea is our only female youth minister in this class. She also is married and is in the process of adopting a zillion children. I think it is really only three. But there is another foster child at their house right now. She needs her own play by play announcer to keep up with her family.

That brings us to David, who I have been coaching for the last year. His church went with a three year contract, delaying the instruction until this year. He is the first person to tell me, "I'll start next year," and actually do it! Ironically, he graduated from high school with James in Tallahassee, making him sixth guy in the same age range.

These nine join a class of eight that are beginning their second year - well kinda. Carolyn started in January and will finish with the group that just started most likely.

The dynamic of the group is pretty exciting though, simply because of the number of people involved. We will all travel to San Diego in a couple of weeks for the National Youth Worker Convention. Our travel group swells to around 23 as alumni, instructors and coaches join us on many of our trips. I'm excited to see how the family comes together this year. I hope I have enough time to enjoy it before they all graduate.



Most Recently

FINALLY!!!

Praise God!!!

I am very thankful for many things. But, I have had three consistent prayers the last two plus years.

#1 10 church contracts - I pray that we partner with ten churches each year. Our maximum is 12. But, if the culture of youth ministry is to improve in Florida, ten churches every year will get the right push over ten years. The last two years that has happened. Thank you, God!

#2 Increased college credit - We are half way on this one. I have been praying that Southwestern College will increase the credit hours to reflect the work our youth ministers are doing. They have done that at the undergraduate level and are working at determining the number of extra hours they will give us towards a graduate degree. Palm Beach Atlantic University is also working on an undergraduate proposal. Almost there.

#3 A Coaching Coordinator - This is the one that has been most agonizing. Our system for training and supporting our coaches needed to improve and I couldn't figure how to make time to improve it. We didn't have the funding out

of our operating budget. The only road to funding this position was to request money from community foundations. Unfortunately, not many fund staff and even fewer fund nontraditional organizations like ours.

Hallelujia!!! The Chatlos Foundation joined the Bell family and the Chesley Magruder Foundation in giving us the money to seed the position. We immediately hired Kathy Rexroad, a retired youth ministry veteran. She started two weeks ago and has already done work that normally takes me two months to complete. She has recruited and trained our new coaches, set up systems where they will be supported and encouraged. She has communicated with all of our supervising clergy and their youth ministers. She has done a lot!!!



I am very excited! Kathy is the right person for this job and, as of yesterday, according to her, she was having a great time. My excitement also comes from knowing that our most successful youth ministers are influenced by consistent coaching!!!

Thank you, God, for answering this final prayer. Uhh, could you work on number two a little bit more?

Partner Highlight

The United Methodist Church



I am a little leary in writing this article simply because I am working really hard at reaching out to multiple denominations. From the beginning we have been intentional about saying that the work that we do is translatable to many other traditions and non denominational youth ministries. So, I want to be clear that our mission encompasses every local church regardless of affiliation.

But, I have been reflecting on our beginnings and how far we have come. We simply would not have done it without the United Methodist Church. In particular, the Florida Conference has been an incredible support. By the end of the year, the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church will have contributed a total of \$100,000 to the Youth Ministry Institute over the seven years of our existence. Wow! I find that amazing.

How did it happen? In our first year of existence they gave us \$40,000 with \$20,000 to be spent on a matching grant program for local United Methodist churches matching particular criteria of size and need. The second year they reduced it to \$30,000 with \$20,000 again going to the matching grant program. This year we used the last of the matching grant money.



And, at \$10,000 per year the past three years, the Florida Conference has been a partner with YMI. We visit churches (usually 35-50 per year) and offer free consulting services (5-11 churches take advantage of this per year). In addition, we participate in planning and resourcing training events for youth ministers. This has produced a growing event called "Rooted". Many other youth ministers have been able to take classes from YMI instructors as a result.

I think I would have been in disbelief if someone would have told me seven years ago that any one organization would have given a total of \$100,000 to YMI. It is an incredible

blessing and I am very thankful as are the nearly 50 churches that have partnered with us so far and the additional 50 churches we have consulted with.

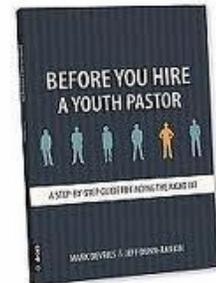
Starting Now

Pre-Hiring Services

I have written about the genesis of our pre-hiring services in the last two newsletters. If you have been following along, we are progressing as I reported. Our first client sent a contract and deposit this week. So, now we get the opportunity to do what we hypothesize.

Our plan is to work with churches all over the country. We surmise that most of this can be done electronically or by phone with an initial on-site visit from your's truly. We have also run this by our friends at Youth Ministry Architects. They are endorsing what we are doing and will refer churches to us seeking help in hiring a youth minister. We also plan to use their book, "Before You Hire a Youth Pastor".

Stay tuned and I'll let you know how it goes.



Coming Soon

YMI Alumni Recruiters

In October the applications will be available!

For the first time we will hire YMI alums to recruit for YMI. Most, after completing our program, spend a certain amount of energy saying great things about their experience in YMI. They are even really good at making referrals, letting me know who I need to have a conversation with.

So, it seems right to make the relationship more official. We will supply a short training course and system of follow up that, hopefully, will increase our effectiveness out on the road. The road to the next class begins in January. So, our timing couldn't be better.

Final Word

From the YMI Guy's Blog



I run about once a week. Four loops in my neighborhood equals 2.8 miles. I play basketball on two other days for about an hour, a little longer yesterday. Today I played soccer for the first time in a decade in a spontaneous parents vs. kids game because of a scheduling error for my son's team.

I will confess. I didn't really want to do any of it. Oh, sure, I put on my running shoes and ran around the block on Monday. I got up at 5:15 a.m. to get ready to go play basketball on Wednesday and Friday. And today, I got out of my beach chair at 1:00 in 90 degree weather to play soccer

against a bunch of 9 year olds. But, I didn't want to do any of it!

Why?

I hate what it feels like at the beginning. The first lap around my neighborhood feels horrible. My muscles are tight. I feel like I can't breathe. When I play basketball it takes me 20 minutes to get my body feeling that it is okay to jump when I shoot. And, sweat. Can we find a way to play sports so that we don't sweat? I thought I could play in the soccer game just hard enough to make it challenging for the kids, but not so hard as to deal with the sweat. My shirt was soaked after five minutes.

I know. I need therapy. Don't we all.

But, what is it that makes it so hard to begin something? Am I afraid of the commitment to make something new happen? Is it knowing that beginning most things takes more effort until it gets fully ramped up and going? Do I have a penchant for laziness, preferring to sit in my over stuffed chair in front of the TV eating pecan sandies (I had two a few minutes ago)?

Yes, yes and yes!!!

It is just hard to get going. So, why do I put myself through such agony?

I also know what it feels like once I'm going. My body adjusts to a new equilibrium on the second lap around my neighborhood. My breathing gets easier. The muscles expand and contract appropriately. I'm nowhere near "The Zone". But, I feel like I can run for a while and not die. On Friday, I played some of my best basketball of the year. I wasn't the best on the court - not even close. But the rhythm of the game came to me. I could dribble, shoot and pass with confidence. I hit two game winning shots, a pretty lay up off a fast break and dribbled behind my back on a nice sideline cut. It was incredibly fun. And, soccer. Well, I scored the first goal against those tough 9 year olds. I almost ripped my shirt off in celebration!!! But, then I remembered where I was and what my torso looks like in the mirror. I kept my shirt on and the celebration to myself.

Once I'm over the hump it feels great to invest in something worthwhile. I've been talking sports this whole time. But it also has felt good to invest in other things like my marriage. Our first year was very difficult. It has been the right thing to have children. I have never been so tired as I was the first few months after each of them were

born. I'm glad I went to college even though there was a significant period of adjustment. Moving to Florida was a great decision but didn't feel like it in the first six months.

Starting a new business seven years ago felt like the right thing to do at the time. And, then, the next year, the recession hit. Talk about scary. Now, I'm looking at the most productive two year cycle we have had. It is amazing!

I guess I'll just keep gutting it out at the beginning knowing what lies beyond the fear, fatigue and stress. And, I pray that you will do the same. Just keep your shirt on!