

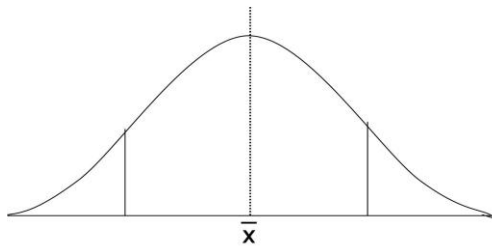
## An Inside Look

I love analyzing things. Anything. I have an amateur theory for everything that happens in the world. I'm not satisfied with a set of facts. I want to know why the facts exist. What force propelled them into existence?

Here are some YMI facts (and some of my analysis).

When YMI began with students in 2006, our first class was pretty young. Nobody exceeded the age of 30. I adamantly thought this was our market - young people coming out of college or just beginning a new career after one or two tries elsewhere. This accurately described our first group of students. There were times I felt like a resident assistant at a college dorm. Our YMI students would stay up late playing games they would make up, laughing and joking. I have to admit. I was a little envious of their nocturnal drive and ability to crank it up the next day in class.

In 2007, the starting class included a couple of second career youth ministers, both over 35. I thought this would be an interesting experiment. I vividly remember the "mom" in my business classes in college who aced all the exams. She was motivated and knew what she wanted to accomplish. My observation years earlier applied to our second career students. Their drive motivated the younger youth ministers, creating a whole different atmosphere.



As the economy began to go south, recruiting became difficult. Churches began to hire from within their own congregations. Over the next three years the norm became second career youth ministers. The average age spiked from the mid 20s to the mid 30s by 2010. We began to coach youth ministers differently, focusing on juggling their multiple responsibilities.

In 2011 the trend slowly reversed. Churches were interviewing candidates outside of their church and hiring first career youth ministers again. I'm not sure if it was the addition of our core theological course work or the shift to younger youth ministers, but the intensity of the learning atmosphere increased. Possibly, it was a cultural remnant from the focused second career learners from a few years earlier.

We are still trending younger each year. Since 2005 only 6 of our 30 graduates began YMI at age 23 or younger. This year alone we have 5 in that age category. Our average age for this year's class is just under 26. We are back to where we began. Most of these young people are still sorting out their life direction. Some are in the midst of experiencing God's call on their life. They are also hungry for knowledge but don't have enough experience to know what they don't know yet.

It is an exciting time for these young youth ministers. And, therefore, it is an exciting time for YMI as we get to join them on their journey as they grow into who God made them to be.

## Most Recently

### Pre-Hiring Service Extends Reach

At the beginning of 2014, we will begin to officially advertise our pre-hiring service. Our web site will be a portal to the details of the service. Churches looking for a youth minister will be able to inquire easily

either by email, phone or the simple-to-use online form. We will also firm up a few partnership agreements that will help increase the number of churches we reach. In addition, an intentional marketing campaign will get the word out.

Presently, churches only know about our service by word of mouth. We worked with seven churches in 2013, placing a youth minister in each church. Three of the churches have partnered with us for the two-year training program for their youth minister (our bread and butter).

Amazingly, word of mouth has reached as far as Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina and Kansas. We have submitted bids at churches in each of these states after they initiated contact with YMI.

It is exciting to help church members focus on the "next steps" God has in mind for their youth ministry. Creating a single vision before the youth minister arrives enhances the success of the youth minister once he or she takes the job. We save churches time while giving their search team a complete picture of the 5-7 "best fit" candidates based on our series of interviews and reference checks. Ultimately, the church interviews and choose from these final candidates.

Our hope is that our process will result in better matches and longer tenured youth ministers. Ultimately, this will save the local church money, resources and youth that get lost in the shuffle of transition.

## Partner Highlight

### Ministry Architects



We have great partners. Since our first assessment with Ministry Architects (then Youth Ministry Architects) in 2007, we have experienced a unified vision. We help the local church.

Ministry Architects has helped a bunch of local churches all over the country. They have worked with over 400. They currently have over 100 active church clients. That means they are actively assessing, coaching or conducting on-site curriculum or visioning workshops with these congregations. Ministry Architects believes in a sound infrastructure on which to build a vital and dynamic youth ministry.

In our partnership, they send one of their lead consultants to partner with the YMI coach assigned to the church and youth minister. They will spend a day and a half on campus interviewing 40-75 people in a variety of focus groups. These listening sessions results in a report listing the strengths of the youth ministry and the challenges that it faces all culminating in recommendations that leverages the strengths to address each challenge. These are compiled into the final section of the report - recommendations. Some need immediate attention and are listed as pressure points. The others are strategically listed in an 18 month-by-month time line.

The task of the YMI coach is to work with the youth minister to insure the time line is accomplished. A renovation team, made up of church members, will also be utilized to keep the time line moving. The end result is, at the end of two years, the church accomplishing everything it hoped or dreamed for its youth ministry.

In addition to the three-day assessment, we are working with Ministry Architects on three other projects. One will connect our pre-hiring process more closely with the work they are doing. Another will help us collect data from churches on particular issues. This information will help both organizations develop strategies to help the local church more completely.

The third project will take place in January 2015. The Academy of Youth Ministry will be supported and marketed by Ministry Architects. This three-day training event for both professional and volunteer youth

ministers will combine practical training with motivational and thoughtful keynote addresses by Kenda Creasy Dean, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Ministry Architects is a forward thinking and creative organization committed to the local church. Sound familiar?

## Coming Soon

**SAVE THE DATE**

**YOUTH MINISTRY INSTITUTE**  
**ANNUAL DESSERT**  
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**2.10.14**

First United Methodist Church • Orlando, FL

*Please look for an invitation in the next few weeks. We hope you will be able to attend.  
Email [steve@ym institute.com](mailto:steve@ym institute.com) regarding any questions you may have.*



*Empowering Youth Ministers to Become Skilled & Effective Leaders*

## Final Word

### From the Sabbath Hangover

#### Preparation

I have spent a life time preparing for things.

Elementary, middle and high school were supposed to prepare me for what? College, right? And, college was supposed to prepare me for a career and the rest of my life. Riiiiiiiiight....

I'm not sure if I'm ever fully prepared for what is happening in any particular moment. Most of what I experience is predictable, yet unforeseen. I know something is coming. The details seem to never turn out exactly the way I plan. But, nevertheless, I diligently prepare for all things.

My wife and I prepared for our first child. We "set up" the nursery, painting it and decorating it. My wife read "What to Expect When You're Expecting." I listened to the relevant excerpts as she relayed them to me. Then, the baby came. Again, predictable. But, yet, we had a feeling of not being fully capable even though we fully prepared. I



remember my wife commenting as we were leaving the hospital, "How do they expect me to care for this baby all by myself? What will happen when I need to ask the nurse a question?"

Prepared. Yet, not.

I have prepared for conversations. In the midst of interpersonal conflict I tend to over prepare. I replay the hypothetical conversation (or confrontation) over and over again, seemingly trying to prepare for every inevitable response I might receive from the other person. It never (and I mean NEVER) turns out any of the ways I rehearsed. Many times it turns out better, saving me some of the agonizing (or ugly) dialogue I have prepared.

Again. Prepared. But, not.

When I was in high school, I would invariably work up enough courage to call and ask out a girl. I had my lines all in my head. I would dial the phone number to her house (notice the ancient references to the use and function of a telephone). Every time the phone would ring and ring and ring (before answering machines). No one would answer. She wouldn't be home.

Prepared. But no result.

I'm not very well prepared for tomorrow. I have my 401(k). We are saving for college for our children. I have a life insurance policy that will pay off the house if I die. But, I have no idea what complexity will face me in the coming days, months or years. My preparation is not foolish. But, it is foolish to think I can prepare for every inevitability.

My step-dad is dying. He has pulmonary fibrosis. He has spent the last week in the hospital. He is not getting better. A few days ago the doctors gave him anywhere from two weeks to six months of life left. That seems like quite a wide range. How does one prepare for that? In talking with my mom, we remind each other to live one day at a time, enjoying each day completely. Even that won't prepare us for the inevitability of his death.

Ironically, Advent started this week. As my family faces inevitable death, so must we face certain birth. Advent is the time for preparation. But, it makes me think, am I ever really prepared for the reality of Jesus being born into my life?

My family is going through the motions of preparing. We are decorating the house. My wife put together a cute Christmas card with all of our smiley faces. I will write the annual Christmas letter this week. We will plan and buy gifts for one another. We will attend Christmas parties, sing Christmas carols and even go to services on Christmas Eve. All of it, great preparation.

Prepared. But not.

Jesus, when I really take his life seriously, has a way of changing the predictable outcomes in my life. When I seek Jesus and the real meaning of his birth into my life, I begin to see the world differently. God tends to reveal surprising outcomes that extend beyond my ability to predict. And, to be honest, while I like predictability, I don't want to subject myself to a world where I have ALL the answers.

Let me be clear. I'm still a fan of preparation. But, maybe it is my expectation that needs the biggest adjustment.

Prepared. And, ready to embrace something for which I am unprepared.

**Thanks for Supporting the  
Youth Ministry Institute**