

# THE CONNECTION

SPRING 2022

*Warm Community*







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# Warm Community

PR. JASON HOLT

Let's be real for a minute.

You may be wondering if I can...and that's completely fair. You may be wondering if you want to be real. Equally fair. Will you give me a moment on it? I appreciate it. Let me explain.

When I get asked about your generation (today's teens), the first description that I often use is motivated by "community." Correct me if you find something else, but my observation is that community really matters to you and your peers. From being with people in person to being with peers online, community matters. Whether Twitch or Discord, even gaming together is important.

To one leader in our AFLC fellowship, I put it this way, "Without community, you will struggle to reach or teach this generation of teens."

Overstated? Maybe.

My point is this -- community matters for today's teens. The flipside of this statement would be this - being alone really stinks. I get that this is not a huge revelation, but it is worth acknowledging. You and I have both been there. Outside looking in. Not a part of the group. Not sure where to begin. Hesitating for the entry point. "Why?" the next section answers the "Why?".

**We were created for relationships.** The Living Lord made humanity and he purposed connection with one another in healthy relationships, because our Triune God Himself is relational. Jesus came to us and continues to come to us in His Word.

**We were created for depth.** More than surface comments and shallow exchanges, human beings thrive when there is something of substance. God gave us His Word, revealing what is really significant and pointing to a relationship with Him by grace through faith. A saving faith that is ours and it is the body of believers. It is both unique and it is shared.

**We were created for warmth.** There is something powerful about authenticity and we notice when it is absent. Over twenty years ago, a Christian rapper declared, "I feel that humans lack the ability to be real." Has much changed? Because of sin, shame, and selfishness, we still put up our guard. Teens do it. Adults are the same.

So we're back to the starting point. Can we be real with one another?

I suspect that many of you want that in your youth ministry, in your congregation, and in your family. Many of you have that in one or more of these settings and I praise Jesus for it. Others of you are

wrestling with where to find it. I'm sorry that is the case. I'm truly hopeful that God's Word and God's Spirit can generate that authentic faith and integrated life in the settings that it is lacking.

But here is my invitation -- **if it isn't around you, be one to reflect it.**

Since I serve as the National Youth Director, I am intrigued by insights that engage teens, parents, leaders, and congregations to pass on the faith to the next generation. In the book *Growing Young*, the authors researched congregations across the United States that have the median age of attendees getting lower. In other words, over time these congregations are getting younger in their average age. It is a sign that the congregation is making meaningful connections with teenagers.

From their research, they identified six elements to a congregation that is getting younger. What was one of the six ingredients found? You guessed it -- "warm community."

Scripture includes the one-chapter New Testament letter titled Philemon. In twenty-five verses, Paul appeals to Philemon to receive back a bondservant (Onesimus), who has become a Christian. Paul points to Philemon's warmth that he and other believers have experienced (verse 7). Paul's appeal to Philemon is to receive Onesimus back as a "beloved brother" (verse 16). The letter builds to Paul's brother-to-brother perspective to Philemon: **"Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ" (verse 20).**

Empowered by faith in Jesus, you can refresh others' hearts in Christ as well. How? Demonstrating the warm community that you desire.

When we wait on others -- teens, parents, leaders, teachers, coaches, etc. -- to express it, then we miss out on our part of the equation.

This column is an invitation to faith, to action, and to express a warm community for the benefit of others. In other words...

Let's be real for a minute.

Pastor Jason Holt

Director of Youth Ministries



# FLY Convention

FLY 2023

# RESTORED

REV. 21:5-7

## July 3-8, 2023



EPH. 4:11-16

# UPWARD

*FLY BEYOND 2022*  
*July 17 - 21*



[aflc.org/youth](https://aflc.org/youth)

# media minute



*Oh, You're changin' my altitude  
Your love is a whole new mood  
Somethin' I can put my faith in  
Oh-ooh, You struck a match in the dark  
You're meltin' my plastic heart  
This is real, don't have to fake it*

From a biblical worldview as followers of Jesus, the lyrics creatively express some important truths to remember:

## "Fake It" by Tauren Wells

The talented Tauren launched the official music video for his song "Fake It" at the end of February. It communicates a life of joy encountered through faith in Jesus.

- + God's truth and love impact our daily view of life.
- + The Lord changes the "dark" and "plastic" in people.
- + An authentic faith expresses confidence in God's activity.

What Scriptures come to mind with these areas of emphasis within the song?

Media Minute engages with today's youth culture by reviewing different messages within it and moving to God's Word to discern what to do with it.

This column sometimes features sacred and other times secular media. It will grab a message or a line from a particular media piece and seek to begin the conversation on it, in order to drive us all back to Scripture.

## AFLC Youth Ministries exists

- to Win teenagers to Christ through the Gospel
- to Build them up in God's truth and God's love
- to Equip them to live their faith and share their faith with others, which results in the multiplying of maturing teen disciples of Jesus



**Rev. Jason Holt**

National Youth Director

**Mr. Daniel Keinanen**

FLY Convention Coordinator

**Rev. Daniel Hurner**

YM Networking Coordinator

**Mrs. Chris Rasmussen**

YM Administrative Coordinator

**Mr. Jordan Langness**

YM Training Coordinator

**Ms. Liz McCarlson**

AFLC Receptionist

**AFLC Youth Ministries, 3110 E Medicine Lake Blvd, Plymouth, MN 55441**

**[aflc.org/youth](http://aflc.org/youth) 763.545.5631**