

# THE CONTACT

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*CONNECTION WITH COMMUNITY*

*AFLC YM NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE IN CONTACT WITH YOUTH  
SUMMER 2021*



## COFFEE SHOP

As I consider Jesus' earthly ministry, I will sometimes debate with myself on, "Which did Jesus prioritize the most? Training the disciples or reaching the lost?" The perk with debating with yourself is that you'll always win. It's interesting to guide students through this as well, watching them grapple with what they know about Jesus. There's certainly plenty of evidence to support either side. We see His dedication on calling, teaching, training, and equipping the disciples (Matthew 5-7, Luke 9). We also see Him connecting with those who were lost and full of longing (John 3 and 4, Matthew 9, Mark 7:24-30, Luke 5:17-39, 17:11-19). It seems like a cop-out answer to say that He prioritized both, but it's not a terrible place to land. One might even argue that Jesus trained the disciples as He encountered the lost, allowing them the chance to imitate Him on their own as He sent them out on mission.

It certainly challenges my attitude as a disciple-maker. How do I interact with people who don't share my faith? How often do I have encounters like this? What does it look like to bring students along? To allow them to be a part of whatever encounters I may have any given day, both scheduled or unplanned?

There are certainly plenty of opportunities, but how we interact with people will depend on where and when we meet them. When you bump into someone as they run errands (like buying groceries or picking up their mail), they may not have a lot of time on their hands. Conversations when people are exercising at the gym may not be as theologically deep or enriching as you may hope.

But that doesn't stop Jesus from engaging with them. His conversation with the Samaritan woman was very different than His talk with Nicodemus, but it was no less a divine encounter. As we consider opportunities for outreach and evangelism, we're invited to consider the example of Jesus: teaching His disciples by example to take advantage of encounters with people, inviting them to "come and see" Jesus.



Pastor Dan Hurner  
AFLC Youth Min  
Networking Coordinator



## Registration Options:

Saturday Seminar \$60

One Night \$120

Full Weekend \$150

**Buy One, Get One Half Off**

(from the same congregation)

January 14-16, 2022

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

Best Rate by

Dec 21, 2021

## YM Video Connection

50-minute offerings for volunteer and vocational youth leaders

### **Tuesday, May 18 at 3PM (Central)**

Join Zoom Meeting

<http://bit.ly/3rAun1R>

Meeting ID: 758 4623 6121

Passcode: YMTues

### **Thursday, May 20 at 8PM (Central)**

Join Zoom Meeting

<http://bit.ly/2WQfevj>

Meeting ID: 716 5987 1408

Passcode: YMThurs

# CONNECTION WITH COMMUNITY

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*PR JASON HOLT*



We have neighbors that have moved in during the last 12 months. Yeah in 2020, seriously! Can you picture moving in the middle of a pandemic? What a time to try to get acquainted! We and our other neighbors have sought to offer a word of welcome to the new neighbors. The recent additions to our block have kindly greeted us when our paths cross and we have waived back and forth from driveway to driveway. But how do you offer connection when no physical exchange of a handshake is possible? We offer a smile, but it is shrouded behind a mask. Even more, how do we bring this valuable family from a simple nearby connection to a place of genuine community?

Connection is one important layer of interaction, but community is significantly deeper.

This situation along with a host of conversations with youth leaders over the last year has led me to reflect on this relationship between connection and community. We responded to the social distance needs by connecting with teens for youth ministry on Zoom and via group texts, but community has not been necessarily continued from these efforts. Connection with community is crucial, but community is not the automatic end result from connection. Our connecting with teens and families only reaches so far, because we all crave tangible and personal expressions of community.

Reading through the first couple chapters of II Corinthians,

the shift from connection alone to connection with community is found in the appeal from Paul to this local congregation. First, Paul is laying a case for his spiritual leadership. Next, the Spirit inspires him to show them that all true believers are intertwined following Jesus together. These evidences direct our attention to healthy youth and family ministry in a posture that does not permit viewing contacting ministry as a simple checklist.

Here are the three demonstrations of how we move through connection to establish the crucial area of community:

## **#1 - Connection scratches the surface, while community submerges to superior depths.**

II Cor. 1:12 mentions the efforts of Paul and his companions to demonstrate “simplicity and godly sincerity...toward you.” They had a connection already, but the church leaders took the time to go further. They were not content with their hearers holding a partial understanding (v. 14), but as spiritual leaders, they desired the Corinthians have a full understanding (v. 13) of both God’s promises in Jesus (v. 19-20) and their burden for them as people of faith in Jesus (v. 23-24).

When we rely on the connection as the endpoint, we diminish the full community that we are called to experience in the body of Christ. Teen believers that I talk to echo that they want genuine depth in their relationships with other teens and the caring adults in their lives. COVID

may have pressed again our capacity to encounter Christ together in person, but the hunger for community continues and remains there for us to step into. As leaders, you and I have the opportunity right now to point our groups to go deeper with Jesus and one another. Part of this process is our willingness to be open with teens and adults about our struggles, fears, and insecurities.

I have found this challenging in the past. I'm finding that there is a difference between openness and transparency. Openness invites conversations about the ups and downs of growing in Christ-likeness, which I can be with teens. Transparency is even deeper and is reserved for the trusted few, as Jesus did with Peter, James, and John in the Garden of Gethsemane. We don't have to press total transparency with teens, and we cannot be surprised that they are not transparent in return with us. Community emerges with proper openness in place.

**#2 - Connection starts to show care, while community stretches to abundant compassion.**

II Cor. 2:3-4 explains Paul's joy and love for the Corinthians. This God-given heart is more than an elementary concern for them, but a Spirit-initiated compassion of Christ. This abundant love appeals for loving one another and forgiving one another (v. 8-10). Connection has value, but it tends to be easily offered as or degenerate into "niceness" - let's be nice to each person. Community is established when the richness of the Great Commandment redirects our attention from being "nice" to being loving.

I'm concerned in my own heart that I as a spiritual leader become easily distracted by the "nice" activity. It is nice to greet someone. It's nice to ask how someone is doing. That's all connection, which has value. But loving goes much, much farther! It is loving to ask a layer beneath out of genuine concern. It's loving to show empathy for the challenges that a teen is facing. (For more on empathy, check out the Convenience Store on page 6.) It's loving to celebrate with moments of spiritual maturity that unfold. Have we taken the bait of a trap thinking "nice" is the pinnacle of our approach with teens?

**#3 - Connection sees the need for sincerity, while community steps into authentic expressions.**

II Cor. 2:17 completes a contrast to those with improper motives with being people "of sincerity, as commissioned

by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ" (ESV). Sincerity shows up again as an arrow pointing toward connection with community. Character matters. Confidence in Christ also matters. The character of who we are as spiritual leaders and the confidence we have in Christ link together inviting others into authenticity with one another.

I wish I could write that I am done with being insincere, because I know from Scripture's description of my old nature that I am not. It would be terrific to list that I will always keep God's calling and Christ's words before me, but we both know that I will fail. My struggle will be with keeping my eyes fixed on Jesus as well as with understanding His unique calling for me. In a world full of uncertainty right now, I can either start to drift or I can see the truth. By His grace, II Corinthians calls us back to Christ. Scripture points us to being the community of His Kingdom, the ones bought by His blood who know life in His name.

**"Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." - II Corinthians 3:4-6**

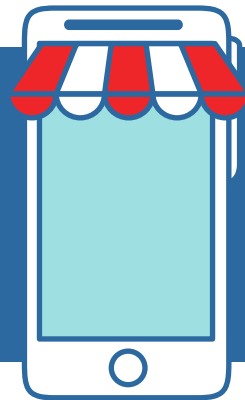


Pastor Jason Holt  
Director of Youth Ministries

Questions to Consider

- 1) We can be quick to list external hurdles to community, but what internal hurdles are you facing in creating community?
- 2) What letter grade would you give the congregation's youth ministry on community? What is one way in which it could be improved?
- 3) Who could I invite (another adult and two teens) into prayerfully pursuing stronger community as a group this summer?

# Convenience Store



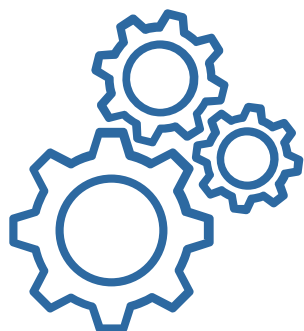
## **"Brene' Brown on Empathy" - HomeWord with Jim Burns**

<https://homeword.com/jims-blog/tuesday-video-brene-brown-on-empathy-2>



## **"In One Moment, This Man Changed Dallas's Life" - The Chosen**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISQMYrIHgxw>



## **"Impatient Leadership" - Randy Davis**

<https://www.youthworkers.net/blog/impatient-leadership-3019.htm>



## **"Walking with Asian-American Young People" by Fuller Youth Institute**

<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/walking-with-asian-american-young-people>

## AFLC Youth Ministries Opportunities

**May 16, 2021**

National Senior Sendoff  
Celebration for HS grads

**May 18 & 20, 2021**

Video Connection  
A time for youth leaders

**May 31, 2021**

Apprenticeship Program  
Leading the next youth leaders

**July 7, 2021**

FLY One-Night Livestream  
National simulcast event for  
teens

**Sept 22, 2021**

See You At The Pole  
National youth prayer day

**Nov. 13, 2021**

Dare2Share Live  
National youth equipping event

**Jan. 14-16, 2022**

Youth Workers Weekends  
National youth leader getaway

## AFLC Youth Ministries

Download our app  
[www.aflc.org/youth](http://www.aflc.org/youth)



National  
Senior Sendoff



Video  
Connection



YM  
Apprentices

**FLY ONE-NIGHT**  
*Livestream*

FLY One-Night Livestream



See You  
At The Pole



Dare2Share  
Live



Youth Workers  
Weekends



# AFLC Youth Ministries



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**MS. LIZ MCCARLSON**  
AFLC RECEPTIONIST

## For Youth Workers

The Contact is issued twice a year to encourage and engage youth workers of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC).

## For Congregations

The AFLC is a fellowship of 250+ congregations whose members believe that the Bible is true and that everyone needs Jesus.

## For Teenagers

AFLC Youth Ministries exists to win teens to Christ, build them in God's word and God's love, to equip them to live and share their faith, and to multiply maturing teen disciples of Jesus.