

The Contact

AFLC Youth Worker's Newsletter

Winter 2015



Lean into the Future

TC

Preparing for What's Next?

By Nick and Laura Sinclair

What do we keep in mind as we prepare for youth ministry? Our first response to that would be – we do nothing. Rather it's God working through us to be used for youth ministry. Our youth program has been blessed with four leaders with many different talents and interests that allow us to reach a wide range of kids.

One of our biggest goals is to create a relationship between the youth group and the leaders. For us to really reach the kids on a deeper level, a couple of hours on a Wednesday night and one Sunday School class a week isn't enough. We need to spend quality time outside of the church building. Quality time means relationships we can build with trust and respect. A mutual trust and respect that comes from the heart. When it comes from the heart it's a genuine bond.

We find that grabbing breakfast, hitting the ski slopes or doing a 50/50 rail slide at the skate park are great ways to create relationships. Bible study is a crucial part of what our youth group does and getting the student into their Bibles is one of our main goals but opening a Bible is not always the first thing we do when it comes to fellowship.

Nick and Laura are youth leaders at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Zumbrota, MN



Coffee
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YOUTH WORKERS W E E K E N D S JANUARY 8 - 10, 2016

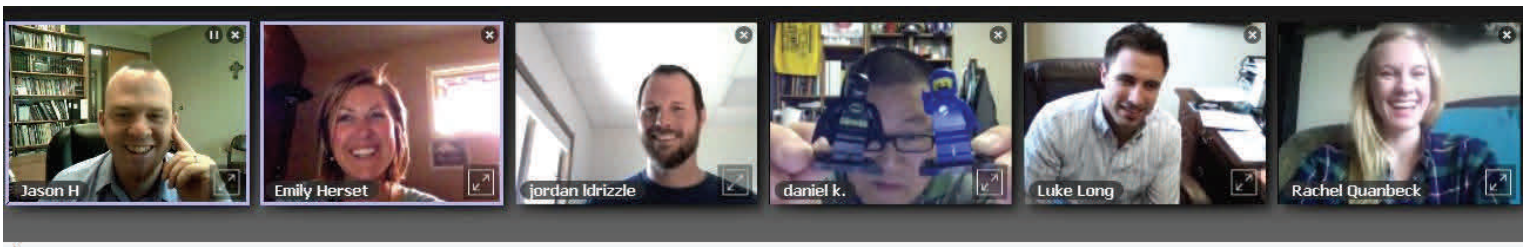
This year's theme is "Tools of the Trade" as we examine ways to sharpen skills on adapting curriculum to your context, integrating teaching with interaction, and engaging parents of teens.

[Register Online](#)

[Schedule](#)

[YWW Promo Video](#)

Best Rate of \$100 by December 12, 2015.



AFLC Youth Ministries — Video Cluster information for the month of **December**
Theme: "Better Together"

Tuesday, December 8 at 2pm (Central)

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/214364677>

Thursday, December 10 at 5pm (Central)

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/734002621>



REFERENCE ROOM

BY PASTOR JASON HOLT

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

~ I Corinthians 3:18-23

The passage above reminds me to keep a healthy view of my own thoughts. When I begin to think that I have something figured out, it directs me back to the feet of Jesus.

My boast has too many times been in people. Whether family, friends, or myself, pride in a person is always an unfounded focus. Now it is helpful for us to make a distinction between the healthy sense of appreciation and the boasting noted in these verses. When a parent takes joy over the character of a child or a Christian leader is encouraged by the spiritual growth of a disciple, it fits to "take pride in" them as in rejoicing in the Lord for His working.

But that's not the sense of the pride in I Corinthians 3.

Boasting comes when we lose sight of the Lord and are locked in on the person. This situation created an issue for the people with this perspective and for those around them. Still today, the Body of Christ can become so enthralled with the leader or with the times that our devotion wanes from the Head of the Church. The One that holds history in His hands is worth our undivided allegiance.

Where does this caution bring us?

A phrase has come out of my mouth in a few youth ministry settings this fall. Now I claim no prophetic voice here. The only voice I have is the forth-telling that each believer in Christ has to proclaim that Jesus is Savior and Lord. I share the following thoughts with the prayer that our AFLC fellowship may both prioritize ministry with teens today and in the future. The phrase is "**lean into the future**".

It is one phrase, but it has two meanings when I have used it:

- 1) Lean forward into the ministry
- 2) Lean ministry sets us up for the future

Lean Forward

The recollection of my first cross country race is a little cloudy. The weather was perfect, but the sights and sounds were a lot to take in as a parent of a competitor. I was both looking out for my child and seeing the mass of humanity. Some people were going through stretches and steps. Others were in a current race that was on the clock. Still others were done and relaxing after the arduous effort.

I think I see why my memory was hazy on it.

It was listed as one meet, but there was certainly more than one thing going on at once. One detail was striking to me watching multiple races between junior varsity and varsity as well as girls and guy. The posture of the runners varied. I saw a clear distinction in the body language between the one that was ready to press on to the goal and the one that was yearning for the finish line to be only three more strides.

Philippians 3:13-14 states, “Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Two applications for us in youth ministry here: lean forward into the challenges of ministry and into its opportunities. Maybe those are one and the same.

Each challenge brings an opportunity to point teens and their families to look to Jesus. Each conflict offers a testing ground for others and ourselves to be refined into the image of Christ.

I admit that I am not always adopting this perspective on issues. I have been hesitant on many occasions to text that troubled teen or to call that frustrated parent or to talk to that congregational leader. The wisdom of the world says to us that we would be best to leave it alone. The wisdom of God reflects in contrast the pursuing heart of the Savior.

Lean Ministry

It was about this time of year in 2008. The AFLC Youth Board had correctly adopted moving the director’s position to part-time. It had been an up and down story about the financial support since 2004 for the smallest department in the AFLC, so the year 2009 would start with a different schedule for me.

Jennifer and I discussed how we would communicate the cut to our kids. We concluded that a visual aid may help our children’s understand in their 12 and younger minds. We made four pizzas. We explained that this reflected our current income. We then took one pizza away and described that would reflect the next year.

The Lord led us through a lean time.

I wonder if more lean years are ahead for the field of youth ministry.

Youth ministry is my burden from the Lord. In the years that have followed, I have heard many accounts of full-time youth leaders moving to part-time...and part-time to volunteer. Some of you reading this arti-

cle are some of those colleagues. I want to say thanks! Thank you for prioritizing passing on the faith to the next generation. **Thank you for thinking of souls over salaries and of impact over comfort.** May we spur one another on no matter what comes in the season ahead!

What is a youth ministry generation? When I use the term about congregational Gospel-focus with teenagers, I am talking about 6 years. It is 6 years from 7th grade to graduation. Although our culture is trying to age compress kids even younger than 12 to see the world as a teenager/tweenager, it is still about 6 years of changes from junior high to 18 years old.

So what then is two youth ministry generations? In this way, it would be 12 years. Here is a different way to look at it. What will youth ministry look like in a typical AFLC congregation when someone born on January 1, 2016 reaches junior high? This question has been coming to me more frequently.

Here are some others that follow quickly behind:

- 1) How can our congregations prioritize healthy youth ministry today so that we are on track to serve a dozen years from now?
- 2) What will it look like for congregations to move from vocational-led to volunteer-led? Or vice versa?
- 3) In what ways can we prepare now for communicating Christ to the teens of the future?

Let us explore these questions and more in our context for effective youth ministry now and in two youth ministry generations by God’s strength.

Our starting passage from I Corinthians 3 ends with a key reminder. You and I are in Christ by His grace. You are His! We approach the world empowered to think Biblically about youth ministry. Would you join me to lean into the future?

*Pastor Jason Holt
Is the National Youth Director
for the AFLC and was returned to
full-time status in 2010 through the
support of the AFLC.*



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5 Tips for Handling Tough Conversations

<http://bit.ly/1Lr6Cvd>



Stephen Curry—NBA Most Valuable Player Acceptance Speech Snippet

<http://bit.ly/1OjtoK4>



When Youth Numbers DO/DON'T Matter

<http://bit.ly/1NhgIGC>



Urgent Care

Oh... My Soul: LIVE

Did you read LIVE like a video feed or LIVE like living for Jesus in the email subject above?

It is one of those strange words like “read” or “wind” that are spelled the same, but are pronounced differently and mean completely different things based on the context of the sentence.

Before I go all *Language Arts* on us (BTW – those terms are called homophones), I bring it up because I am learning to face the difference in youth ministry between LIVE and LIVE.

You may ask, *“What do you mean?”*

The first LIVE, as in the sports event on TV is carried “live”, is what I feel pressure to BE at times in youth ministry settings. “On the Air” youth ministry guy needs to be engaging, right? Yes, I need to prioritize people and to initiate, but I don’t have to be a certain LIVE persona to be effective. I can trust God’s Word and God’s Spirit.

The second LIVE, as in the couple “lived” happily ever after, is what I am finding in my walk with Jesus. When I live in Christ, my motivation turns from my expectations to His grace and from my discouragement to His glory.

The first one is hopeless.

The second one brings hope in Jesus.

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” ~ Psalm 43:5

Learning to Live,
Jason

P.S. 43 months ago, we released an “Oh...My Soul” looking at the reality that believers are not home yet, but one day we will be with Jesus. The first reply I received from that email release was from the late Jeremy Erickson. It was only 50 days before he would see Jesus face-to-face. I was reminded of that exchange this month and I admit to you as a colleague that I miss my friend and brother in Christ, but it reminded me to LIVE this day by faith in Jesus. I pray it may encourage you as well.

*Pastor Jason Holt
Is the National Youth Director
for the AFLC*



UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2016



- Jan 8-10 Youth Workers Weekends @ the ARC, Osceola WI
- National youth leader retreat
- Feb 5-7 ARC Winter Retreats @ the ARC, Osceola WI
- Side x Side (7-12 Grade) and Sno Daze (4-7 Grade)
- March 11-13 AFLBS Campus Days @ Minneapolis MN
- Visit weekend for high school students
- July 5-8 AFLC-YouthWorks @ Kansas City, MO
- Serving week for AFLC Youth Groups
- July 18-22 FLY Beyond 2016 @ the ARC, Osceola WI
- National youth equipping conference
- Sept 28 See You At The Pole @ Your School
- International day of prayer for teenagers

The Contact is published twice a year to encourage and engage youth workers of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

The AFLC is a growing fellowship of 275 churches whose members believe that the Bible is true and that everyone needs Jesus.

AFLC Youth Ministries exist for three goals: to win, to build, and to equip youth for Jesus Christ. We are here to assist in multiplying making disciples!



Editor Pastor Jason Holt
AFLC Youth Ministries
National Youth Director
Mon-Fri 8:30am-5:30pm
jasonholt@aflc.org

Managing
Editor Chris Rasmussen
AFLC Youth Ministries
Administrative Assistant
Mon-Fri. 8:00am-4:30pm
chrizr@aflc.org