

YOUTH PASTORS FORUM

Rethinking the Way We Do Youth Ministry

with

MIKE YACONELLI

and panelists

Jeff Lillea

Alice Wydro

Amy Dierlam

Steve Wilde

Efrem Smith

Mike Yaconelli

In case you don't know "Yac", here's a quick introduction. Back in 1968, at the dawn of youth ministry, he co-founded Youth Specialties with Wayne Rice to provide support and resources for youth work. He's written or co-written stuff most youth workers use all the time, such as Keep 'Em Talking, Play It, Next Level WWJD Journal, the Ideas series, and more articles than you can shake a Web site at. (The Web site to shake? www.youthspecialties.com – check it out!) His first "real" book, Dangerous Wonder: The Adventure of Childlike Faith, came out last year, and his Dangerous Wonder columns on the YS Web site just won an award from the Evangelical Press Association.

Mike says, "Modern youth ministry is too successful," with its icons of Size, Speed, Power and Program. He suggests that what our kids need instead is ministry built on relationship, slowness, powerlessness and smallness.

NOTES

Youth Ministry Practitioners

Rev. Stephen Wilde

His thing is intergenerational involvement and inclusion. Youth sit on adult committees, help plan sermons and worship, take leadership roles on missions trips, etc. His goal is to create a youth program to nurture and create mature Christian adults, so that by the time they leave the youth group they are ready to function realistically in a church structure. He's Associate Pastor of Youth and Their Families at the Presbyterian Church of Sunnyvale, Sunnyvale, CA. The junior high group is called Flash and the high school group is called Clue.

Notes

Ephrem Smith

He's part of the Youth Specialties Resource Team. His ministry is multi-ethnic and urban, and kids come in from the suburbs too. His goal is "Many People for One Purpose." The kids, he says, are members of "tribes"—hip-hop tribe, mall tribe, skateboard tribe, and so on—and his goal is to try to make the different tribes into one: a "Sneak Preview of Heaven." He had a great gig in a suburban church but left it to go back home. Now he's Youth Pastor/Youth Development Director at Park Avenue Church and Foundation in Minneapolis, and the youth ministry is the Park Avenue Youth Revolution.

Notes

Jeff Lillea

His emphasis is on relationships, so he's got lots of advisors working with kids. He keeps groups small—under 30—because they are completely invested in each life, and he calls this model “Intentional Discipleship.” He's Youth Director, Community Presbyterian Church in Vacaville, CA. The junior high group is called J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) and the senior high group is New Life.

Notes

Alice Wydrow

Her uniqueness is bringing Jesus to the kids as opposed to bringing kids to the church. She does almost 100% outreach, eating lunch at the high schools and hanging out at Starbucks in order to meet kids. Her after-school ministry spans the slums and the millionaire turf. She did focus groups to set up the youth program and built it on what she heard from kids—down to designing the facility, complete with computer lab, meditation room, and game room. She was youth minister at Burlingame United Methodist Church, Burlingame, CA.

Notes

Amy Dierlam

Amy's unusual in coming from a liturgical denomination and background. She speaks a lot about incorporating ritual appropriately and being spiritual. This meets a felt need in the lives of her kids, because tradition and meaningful ritual are comforting to a lot of people—it's not just grownups who are turning to traditional liturgical churches. She's Youth and Young Adult Ministries Coordinator for the Episcopal Diocese of Northern California.

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