

Let the Youth of Your Church Touch the Child Within

by Hester Shipp

A while back, I was at a baseball game and found my attention focused, not by the game, but by a little boy a few rows in front of me. This boy, like most of the other children there, had little understanding of the rituals of baseball and therefore turned to his immediate surroundings for entertainment. He began with his stadium seat, which was a whole new world waiting to be explored. First he studied the hinges and then the seat's fabric. Finally he crawled under the seat and studied the underside carefully. He tugged on his father's shirt, eager to show him all his exciting discoveries. His father shrugged off his son's enthusiasm.

I laughed to myself because I knew I had been that father, so often missing the simple wonders in life and ignoring those who try to remind me that even the chair I am sitting in is a treasure.

But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the Kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

Mark 10:14-15

Look at the youth in your lives and in your church, for they are the torch bearers lighting the way to the Kingdom of God. Establish a Youth Sunday in your church's calendar. Let them lead a service in their own creative way. It is one way that

The Jubilee Café

A thriving volunteer project that is student-driven

by Joe Alford

An interesting dilemma occurred in the spring of 1994 when several Episcopal students from Canterbury House, the Episcopal campus ministry at Kansas University, signed up as volunteers for community projects in Lawrence, Kansas. No one

we can show the youth they are valued members of our church. They have a lot to teach us.

In preparation for leading the service, they explore the liturgy just as the boy explored his stadium seat. They dig into the worship in a new way. They eagerly tug at our shirts to show us their discoveries. Will we be the little boy's father who shrugs it off, or will we strive to walk as children of the light?

Youth Sunday is also an important time for those older youth who have been confirmed. For as confirmands, they are affirmed as adult members of the church. Therefore they should be allowed the same responsibilities. Unique talents will surface as they prepare for the service in the comfort of their peer group. These talents can be embraced by the entire congregation throughout the year. In our own congregation, we were blessed to discover two lay readers, a musician, and several new recruits for ushering. All are now scheduled consistently in the life of the church.

Open your minds and hearts and let the youth of your church touch the child within. It is not an easy undertaking. It requires vulnerability, flexibility, enthusiasm, and often a comfortable pair of dancing shoes. Pay attention to the youth that are tugging at your shirt tail eager to show you their Kingdom with a renewed sense of wonder!

Hester Shipp is Coordinator of Youth Ministries at Calvary Episcopal Church, Memphis, Tennessee, in the Diocese of West Tennessee.

It goes without saying that the youth in our congregations and on our college campuses are the future of our Church. The impact of program and educational instruction in these formative years could well have bearing on the depth of this generation's commitment to the organized church for the rest of their lives. This issue of *Vestry Papers* is devoted to these matters affecting our youth.

ever called on them to volunteer! Perhaps the community project they signed up for had bad experiences with students as volunteers in the past, or maybe there was no place to put them. But it's disappointing when you want to help others, then offer to help and no one calls on you.

(Continued on page 4)

Learnings from the Episcopal Church's Young Adult Ministry Network

by Thomas K. Chu

In 1993, the Episcopal Church Center initiated a new ministry emphasis with non-student young adults aged 19-30 by expanding the scope of the staff office for ministry in higher education. Since that time, the Office for Young Adult and Higher Education Ministries has continued to gather information and assess the needs of the group's constituency through its work with diocesan staffs, congregations, and young adults themselves.

The unique strength of this ministry is that it gives a voice to those who are the likely partners - those who will shape its future. By revisiting our ministry focus together on a periodic basis, we are able to deepen relationships and refine our learnings.*

In 1994 and 1997, the office convened young adult ministers and constituents from across the Church to do its own needs assessment. Over 40 dioceses were represented by the 100 participants. The following are some of the core insights that have come out of those meetings:

A "tired battery syndrome" has been identified as a drain on young adults who are doing youth ministry and children's ministry, resulting in a high frustration level and unmet spiritual needs. Burnout for some is a possibility.

Young adults' needs shift through the developmental range - in career and vocation, intimate relationships, and identity.

The "age thing" is a challenge: the boundaries between youth and adulthood are fuzzy. Within the 18-30 age range, there are at least two developmental areas of emphasis. Any possibility of getting youth and young adults confused or conflated should be avoided.

Older adult church leaders and staff are important partners in making young adult ministry go great. There is a need for them to be supportive without being overly so, yet at the same time, putting their own needs aside.

Once a ministry is implemented, **stability, continuity, and predictability** are key. This means delivering what is promised. Frequency of activity also becomes a real issue. In some instances, offering a program once a week is sufficient.

Be well prepared every time, all the time. Active communication, including personal notes, personal phone calls, bulletin announcements, and mass mailings, make this kind of relational ministry work.

Be responsive to the grassroots ideas, responses, and sensibilities of the constituency. Do this by being flexible and offering lots of options with non-threatening social activities as a way in.

Having sufficient funds helps.

Reaching out to people who are not already in church provides opportunities to reach many others who are also not affiliated with a church. (The social networks of people who attend church tend to include mostly one another.)

Be available and open as a Christian to those in your workplace. This is sometimes hard for Episcopalians!

There are things that don't work in a young adult ministry. They include: too-rapid integration of young adults into congregational life, overemphasis on "Generation X" issues, impersonal contacts and mailings, and "smoothing" by older adults.

Never-marrieds and newly/recently marrieds (without children) seem to have more common interests than do marrieds-with-children and divorced/widowed/separated singles.

"Single" as a title confuses some people. It seems that there are many people in their 20s who are never-marrieds, and fewer 20 something are getting married in their early 20s.

There is a huge **diversity of needs** for this age group around the Church. As programs are planned, don't try to do it all. Try to maintain a clarity of focus for mission and ministry.

*A video resource bringing together the voices of 20 young adults from across the church titled *Young Adult Forum: Snapshot of a Generation* is available for \$19.95 by calling 800/334-7627, extension 6158.

The Rev. Thomas K. Chu is Staff Officer for Young Adult and Higher Education Ministries at The Episcopal Church Center.

It is not possible for civilization to flow backward while there is youth in the world. Youth may be headstrong, but it will advance its allotted length.

Helen Keller

NEWS for you is a newsletter published by the Episcopal Church Center's Ministries with Young People Cluster. It is full of information about youth ministries, programs, books and videos, confer-

ences and other issues related to youth. If your congregation is not on the mailing list for this quarterly publication and would like to be, call the Church Center at (800) 334-7626.

Life University: A New Model for Youth Ministry

by Stephanie Turnbull, Editor

Province VI, under the leadership of Canon Missioner Lisa Kimball of the Diocese of Minnesota, has developed a bold new initiative for young people with identifiable leadership skills – Life University. **The mission of this 10-day annual program is “to equip high school youth with skills they need to become successful leaders in their church and community, using the gifts God gave them.”**

According to Kimball, the Episcopal Church has made great strides over the last fifteen years in providing strong skills training to adults who work with youth ministries. However, as resources dwindle and funding sources disappear, there are no longer enough trained adults to go around. Kimball’s idea was to compliment the adult structure by identifying young people with leadership skills who could begin to take on the responsibilities of their adult counterparts.

With that in mind, she took her idea to the Youth Ministry Network in Province VI and Life University was launched. From the beginning, the program has been built by youth for youth. **At its center is the Gospel and the Baptismal Covenant.** From that center, the three main facets of the program evolve: spirituality, relationships, and skills development. The youth involved brainstormed and developed the content under each component. **The goal of the program is to provide the training necessary so that each participant will be equipped to develop a ministry project upon**

returning home at the end of the 10-day program.

The syllabus for the program includes daily plenary sessions on communications skills, diversity and anti-racism training, systems theory, and church and government structures. In addition, each participant chooses a major focus area and spends 3-4 hours each day working in that area. The focus areas include group process, family systems, public speaking and storytelling, computer communications, social action/advocacy, peer ministry, and video/media skills. Each day ends with an evening life skills workshop. Some of the topics discussed in these evening sessions are survival cooking, basic financial issues, how to deal with parents, choosing a college, how to write a resume, and sexuality.

Another component of the program is the concept of the rule of life. Each participant creates his/her own rule, and there is a community rule of life as well.

Each youth participant in the program is paired with a mentor, and a local mentor is chosen to act as an advocate for that person, if needed, upon returning home.

The first Life University was held in the summer of 1997 at Shattuck-St. Mary’s Episcopal School in Faribault, Minnesota, and will be held there once again this year.

If you would like more information about this program, please contact Lisa Kimball at the Diocese of Minnesota, (612) 871-5311. Her e-mail address is lisa.k@episcopalmn.org.

Almighty God, heavenly father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Book of Common Prayer

A Look at the Theological Foundations in Godly Play and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

If your Christian education department is contemplating the use of either Godly Play or Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in the curriculum for younger children, you might want to share with them some of the theological differences between the two programs as they decide which to use. The Rev. Robert J. Gaestel, Rector of the Church of the Angels in Pasadena, California, has written a brief treatise on the subject.

Gaestel states that both programs share much in common, and on the surface they look very much the same. The two methods of religious education each use a Montessori method of teaching, thus creating many similarities in the way the material is presented to children. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd was created in the early 1950s in Rome by Dr. Sofia Cavalletti, a Hebrew scholar and specialist in the field of ecumenism, especially the Jewish/Christian relationship. Godly Play was creat-

ed by the Rev. Jerome Berryman who has extensive background in child development and Montessori education.

According to Gaestel, while the methodology is very similar, the two programs have very different theological foundations. A few of those differences are listed here.

The goal of Catechesis is to help the child fall in love with God by his or herself; the goal of Godly Play is to create a situation whereby the child becomes more aware of their identity as creators involved with God.

In Catechesis, the image presented of God is Christ the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep, calls them by name, and gives everything that he is for the sheep; the image pre-

(Continued on page 4)

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in.

Rachel Carson

(Continued from page 1)

One of the Canterbury students said in frustration, "We should form our own volunteer project just run by KU students that we can control ourselves." That's exactly what they did.

That summer at an annual summer conference of chaplains and laity who work in college ministry, I learned of a volunteer project at the University of Iowa called the Agape Café which served a breakfast to homeless people one morning a week. I visited the café to see how it worked.

I took the idea home to the KU Canterbury students. They liked it and were off and running. The students secured a start-up grant of \$500 from the College Work Commission of the Diocese of Kansas and permission from Trinity Episcopal Church, the large downtown parish, to use its kitchen and parish hall. Within the year they had started their own café which they named "The Jubilee Café."

In October 1995, the doors opened and twelve guests showed up that first morning. Now, more than three and one-half years later, the average attendance is 50, and more than 8,000 meals have been served.

The students serve a breakfast in a café-style setting with table cloths, china, and silverware. Free newspapers are on the tables, and music plays in the background.

The homeless and needy guests order from a

(Continued from page 3)

sented in Godly Play is that of the Creator and creature at play together.

Catechesis begins with the reality of Christ, and everything else finds its meaning in him. Its use of the Old Testament follows more closely the Church's lectionary. It is a Christocentric approach. Godly Play is more in line with other Christian education programs which begin their exploration of the Bible with the Old Testament and progress forward chronologically. It is a Theocentric approach.

Gaestel states that the theology of both programs is important for religious educators to understand so

menu, and the KU student volunteers who serve them ask their names when they take their order. The student servers also take a break during the morning and sit down, eat breakfast with the guests, and get to know these homeless people.

It is difficult to say whether the homeless guest or the KU student is the primary beneficiary. The homeless are treated with dignity and respect as well as receiving a good breakfast. The KU student volunteers are able to put a real face and real name on people we often simply designate as 'homeless.'

The Jubilee Café is totally run by students. Students buy, cook, and serve the food, and The Jubilee Café is actually a state-licensed restaurant. Canterbury House/KU has been joined by several other co-sponsors including the KU Student Senate, The Lutheran Campus Ministry, and Hillel Foundation (Jewish). More than 300 students have volunteered since October 1995.

On Good Friday, 1998, The Jubilee Café began serving breakfast on Fridays as well as Tuesdays. We have more students volunteer than we have openings for service. We had to expand to another day per week in order to accommodate the students who want to volunteer. It's a wonderful problem to have, and I now understand why those who recruit volunteers aren't always able to place everyone who wants to help.

The Rev. Joseph Alford is Chaplain at Canterbury House, the Episcopal Church at the University of Kansas.

that the educator knows clearly what they believe and why. He concludes that one's theological foundation becomes the ordering principle upon which one makes choices about what they will present as well as when and how.

Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education by Jerome Berryman is available in many bookstores. It is published by Augsburg Fortress, ISBN: 0806627859. For information on the Catechesis program, please contact Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, P.O. Box 1084, Oak Park, Illinois 60304. You can also obtain information by viewing their web site: <http://www.catechesisgoodshepherd.org>.

The Cornerstone Project

a ministry of
The Episcopal

Church Foundation

815 Second Avenue, Room 400
New York, NY 10017-4564
(800) 697-2858

Director

William S. Craddock, Jr.

Editor & Program Associate

Stephanie Turnbull

Field Coordinator

The Rev. James P. Fallis, Jr.

Executive Assistant

Debbie Burnette

Subscriptions

(\$25 annually for 5 issues
sent in packages of 12 copies of
each issue)

To subscribe, contact the
Cornerstone offices listed above.

Questions . . .

**Editor's Note: It has been suggested through the evaluation forms enclosed with each issue of Vestry Papers that key questions about the topic should be included as a way of stimulating vestry response. The following are questions your vestry might want to consider in looking at youth programs in place in your congregation.*

• Are the programs your congregation is offering in early childhood education of the calibre to hold young families?

• Do you provide the youth in your congregation the opportunity to have active leadership roles in the liturgy?

• Is your congregation staying current on new curriculum developments for all segments of your youth program?

• Are the youth in your congregation heard and supported by your vestry?

• Are your youth programs growing in numbers of participants?