

Bethel Focus

Bethel Presbyterian Church, Organized 1764

3 Traits of Youth Who Don't Leave the Church

“What do we do about our kids?” The group of parents sat together in my office, wiping their eyes. I’m a high school pastor, but for once, they weren’t talking about 16-year-olds drinking and partying. Each had a story to tell about a “good Christian” child, raised in their home and in our church, who had walked away from the faith during the college years.

These children had come through our church’s youth program, gone on short-term mission trips, and served in several different ministries during their teenage years. Now they didn’t want anything to do with it anymore. And, somehow, these mothers’ ideas for our church to send college students “care packages” during their freshman year to help them feel connected to the church didn’t strike me as a solution with quite enough depth.

The daunting statistics about church-going youth keep rolling in. Panic ensues. What are we doing wrong in our churches? In our youth ministries?

It’s hard to sort through the various reports and find the real story. And there is no one easy solution for bringing all of those “lost” kids back into the church, other than continuing to pray for them and speaking the gospel into their



lives. However, we can all look at the 20-somethings in our churches who are engaged and involved in ministry. What is it that sets apart the kids who stay in the church? Here are just a few observations I have made about such kids, with a few applications for those of us serving in youth ministry.

1. They are converted.

The Apostle Paul, interestingly enough, doesn’t use phrases like “nominal Christian” or “pretty good kid.” The Bible doesn’t seem to mess around with platitudes like: “Yeah, it’s a shame he did that, but he’s got a good heart.” When we listen to the witness of Scripture, particularly on the topic of conversion, we find that there is very little wiggle room. Listen to these words: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new

has come.” (2 Cor. 5:17) We youth pastors need to get back to understanding salvation as what it really is: a miracle that comes from the glorious power of God through the working of the Holy Spirit.

We need to stop talking about “good kids.” We need to stop being pleased with attendance at youth group and fun retreats. We need to start getting on our knees and praying that the Holy Spirit will do miraculous saving work in the hearts of our students as the Word of God speaks to them. In short, we need to get back to a focus on conversion. How many of us are preaching to “unconverted evangelicals”? Youth pastors, we need to preach, teach, and talk—all the while praying fervently for the miraculous work of regeneration to occur in the hearts and souls of our students by the power of the Holy Spirit! When that hap-

September 2014

Sermon Schedule

- 9/7 “Issues of the Heart”
Matthew 15:1-20
- 9/14 “A Significant Confession”
Matthew 16:13-22
- 9/21 “A Jesus Follower”
Matthew 16:24-28
- 9/28 “A Remarkable Testimony”
Matthew 17:1-13

Inside this issue:

September Calendar	2
August Session Minutes	3
Prayer Requests	4

pens—when the “old goes” and the “new comes”—it will not be iffy. We will not be dealing with a group of “nominal Christians.” We will be ready to teach, disciple, and equip a generation of future church leaders—“new creations”!—who are hungry to know and speak God’s Word. It is converted students who go on to love Jesus and serve the church.

2. They have been equipped, not entertained. Recently, we had “man day” with some of the guys in our youth group. We began with

September 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	01	02 Circle #1 Diaconate Meeting	03 Basketball	04	05	06
07 Choir Practice Deacon's Fund Collection Sunday Evening Celebration!	08 Margaret Hayes Staff Meeting Circle #3	09 Dionne Coburn Harper Love Circle #2	10 Coleen Riddle Circle Basketball	11 Meredith Clinton	12 Beth Jackson Brett Brackett	13 Beth Stowe
14 Choir Practice Session Meeting Sunday Evening Celebration!	15 Tom Ed Glenn Staff Meeting	16	17 FLC Reserved, Life Line... Basketball	18	19	20 Phyllis Wysor
21 Choir Practice WIC Council Meeting Sunday Evening Celebration!	22 Stacy Dixon Staff Meeting	23 Paul Joyner Patsy Robinson	24 Mason Stowe Senior Citizens Luncheon Basketball	25 Mary Jane Dulin Kyle Mounts	26 Teresa Spanler	27
28 Choir Practice Jenni Quinn Sunday Evening Celebration!	29 Duke McCarter Staff Meeting	30	01	02	03	04

3 Traits of Youth Who Don't Leave the Church, continued

an hour of basketball at the local park, moved to an intense game of 16" ("Chicago Style") softball, and finished the afternoon by gorging ourselves on meaty pizzas and 2-liters of soda. I am not against fun (or gross, depending on your opinion of the afternoon I just described) things in youth ministry. But youth pastors especially need to keep repeating the words of Ephesians 4:11-12 to themselves: "[Christ] gave...the teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Christ gives us—teachers—to the church, not for entertainment, encouragement, examples, or even friendship primarily. He gives us to the church to

"equip" the saints to do gospel ministry in order that the church of Christ may be built up. If I have not equipped the students in my ministry to share the gospel, disciple a younger believer, and lead a Bible study, then I have not fulfilled my calling to them, no matter how good my sermons have been. We pray for conversion; that is all we can do, for it is entirely a gracious gift of God. But after conversion, it is our Christ-given duty to help fan into flame a faith that serves, leads, teaches, and grows. If our students leave high school without Bible-reading habits, Bible-study skills, and strong examples of discipleship and prayer, we have lost them. We have

entertained, not equipped them...and it may indeed be time to panic! Forget your youth programs for a second. Are we sending out from our ministries the kind of students who will show up to college in a different state, join a church, and begin doing the work of gospel ministry there without ever being asked? Are we equipping them to that end, or are we merely giving them a good time while they're with us? We don't need youth group junkies; we need to be growing churchmen and churchwomen who are equipped to teach, lead, and serve. Put your youth ministry strategies aside as you look at that 16-year-old young man and ask: "How can I spend four years



August Session Minutes

The Session of Bethel Presbyterian Church met Sunday, August 10, 2014 at 2 PM in the Conference Room of the Family Life Center with Moderator, Rev. John Gess, for the regular scheduled joint quarterly meeting. The meeting was called to order and opened with reading of the Scriptures from Deuteronomy 6:1-12, and prayer by the Moderator.

A quorum was present. Elders present: J. Brent Clinton, Christopher L. Wallace, Robert N. Boyd, Frank C. Falls, Robert C. Love, Jr., Steven H. Linder, James G. Long, Timothy G. Marsh and Robert B. Meek, Jr. The following Deacons were present: Brett Brackett, Keith Brackett, Calvin Reese, Steve Britt, Adam Coble, Todd Meek, Larry Falls, Don Love, Cory Clinton and Ruben Trevino. Also present were Pastoral Intern, Will Milks, and Pastoral Intern candidate, Jonathan Goundry. A motion was M/S/A to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2014 Session meeting as written and mailed to each Session member.

Jonathan Goundry, who will begin RTS in a few weeks, shared his testimony and call to the ministry as well as immediate plans forward, including an internship with a Reformed Church, and longer term a possible return to England in the ministry. He was then dismissed from the meeting. A motion was M/S/A to offer an internship to Jonathan Goundry for one RTS school year (September, 2014 – May, 2015), with compensation to include the use of the Price Mission House (exclusive of utilities) and salary of \$500/month for September, 2014 through May, 2015 (\$4,500).

Steve Britt, Chairman of the Diaconate, gave the Deacons Report and reviewed the minutes of the August 5, 2014 Deacons meeting, a copy of which is appended to these minutes. A motion was M/S/A to approve the Deacons report, Deacons minutes, financial report and actions taken.

The Deacons will provide a report to the congregation on August 24th concerning current finances. The Pastoral Search

Committee will also provide a brief report to the congregation on that date.

Motions M/S/A: to call a Congregational meeting for Sunday, September 14, 2014 following morning worship, for the purpose of nominating Deacons for the Class of 2018; revised a list of all male members of Bethel, age 18 and above, for potential Deacon nominees for the Class of 2018; to accept Jay and Deb Thiessen into the membership of Bethel Presbyterian Church, based on transfer of letter from Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Valdosta, Georgia; to affirm that the Session is committed to supporting the Biblical mandate on giving, a minimum of the tithe.

The Pastoral Search Committee provided an update of their work to the Session.

A motion was M/S/A to adjourn. The meeting was closed with prayer by Chris Wallace.

Robert C. Love, Jr.
Clerk of Session

3 Traits of Youth Who Don't Leave the Church, continued

with this kid, helping him become the best church deacon and sixth-grade Sunday school class teacher he can be, ten years down the road?"

3. Their parents preached the gospel to them.

As a youth pastor, I can't do all this. All this equipping that I'm talking about is utterly beyond my limited capabilities. It is impossible for me to bring conversion, of course, but it is also impossible for me to have an equipping ministry that sends out vibrant churchmen and churchwomen if my ministry is not being reinforced tenfold in the students' homes. The common thread that binds together almost every ministry-minded 20-something that I know is abundantly clear: a home where the gospel was not peripheral but absolutely central. The 20-somethings who are

serving, leading, and driving the ministries at our church were kids whose parents made them go to church. They are kids whose parents punished them and held them accountable when they were rebellious. They are kids whose parents read the Bible around the dinner table every night. And they are kids whose parents were tough but who ultimately operated from a framework of grace that held up the cross of Jesus as the basis for peace with God and forgiveness toward one another.

This is not a formula! Kids from wonderful gospel-centered homes leave the church; people from messed-up family backgrounds find eternal life in Jesus and have beautiful marriages and families. But it's also not a crapshoot. In general, children who are led in their faith during

their growing-up years by parents who love Jesus vibrantly, serve their church actively, and saturate their home with the gospel completely, grow up to love Jesus and the church. The words of Proverbs 22:6 do not constitute a formula that is true 100 percent of the time, but they do provide us with a principle that comes from the gracious plan of God, the God who delights to see his gracious Word passed from generation to generation: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Youth pastors, pray with all your might for true conversion; that is God's work. Equip the saints for the work of the ministry; that is your work. Parents, preach the gospel and live the gospel for your children; our work depends on you.

Bethel Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Church in America
Organized 1764

2445 Highway 557, Clover, SC 29710
Phone: 803.222.7166
office@bethelchurchpca.com
www.bethelchurchpca.com



Prayer Requests:

Pastor John Gess and Interns Will Milks and Jonathan Goundry as they preach and minister to the Bethel congregation, and for their families, and the Ashbaugh family as they transition to leading RUF at Winthrop.

The Lees as they seek to implement the Member Care Ministry for MTW Latin America, that the Lord will enable them to minister to the MTW missionaries of Latin America with compassion and humility; for Justin Marshburn, Amber's boyfriend and Tegan's father; that the Lord will draw Justin to Himself.

Please pray for the Pulpit Committee and all facets of the search for Bethel's next pastor. Please pray that God would be glorified in the process and for His provision for the church. Session and Diaconate members,

WIC officers, Sunday School teachers, Bible Study leaders, Youth leaders/teachers, giving thanks for their faithfulness and willingness to serve.

Missionaries throughout the world, as well as local ministries such as Habitat for Humanity, God's Kitchen, Clover Area Assistance Center and Biblical Studies Released Time. Please pray fervently for the work in Northern Mexico.

Pray for people in western Africa who are afflicted by the Ebola outbreak, and for aid workers. Pray for effective treatment, containment and eradication of this terrible virus.

Our college students, and expectant mothers and their unborn babies within the church family.

Our soldiers serving in Afghanistan, Europe & Iraq: James Pittman, III (nephew of Victoria & Steve Linder), John Rice (grandson of Joe & Phyllis

Wysor) recovering from injuries from a roadside bomb explosion, Greg Sandifer, and Ted Trevino.

Charlotte Barnett, Knox Bennett (friend of Frank & Larry Falls, colon cancer), Monnie Blackman (C. Robinson's sister, lupus), Loma Burton, Abe Craddock (friend of J. LeMoyne, emphysema), Zeke Dunbar (3 year old suffering from cancer, friend of M. Falls), Susan Heffner (cancer), Sherer Gordon Hopkins, Bob Kenley, Herb LeMoyne (J. LeMoyne's brother, Parkinson's disease), Rick Lindsay (Pastor of Scherer Memorial PCA, cancer), Harold McCarter, Randy McCarter (son of Duke & Maxie McCarter, cancer), Jesse Patino (B. Love's brother-in-law, lymphoma), Jim Pittman (V. Linder's brother, prostate cancer, has spread to his spine), Bobby Wallace (effective cancer treatments), Clay West. Pray for our church and the Pastoral Search Committee.