

Youth Newsletter

June 2004

Youth Clubs Prepare to Close Out Youth Group Season

Bethlehem's youth groups were busy during the month of May closing out the 2003-2004 youth group season.

The Pioneer Clubs were busy completing their units and earning their final Bible Memory and Activity Awards of the season.

On Sunday, May 23, the Scooter and Voyager clubs made another visit to the nursing home, while the Omega Youth held a pool party at John Driver's house, closing out their Regular Meeting schedules.

The 2003-2004 youth group season officially ends with the Youth Group Cook-Out on Sunday, June 6. Youth and parents are encouraged to come out to Bennett's Creek Park from 3:00pm until 7:30pm to enjoy great food, fun, and fellowship.

Some clubs may have special events scheduled during the summer months, such as the Alpha Youth Group's Overnight Lock-In on Friday, June 25, in Graham Hall. Be sure to ask your child's club leaders if they have any special events planned over the summer.

The schedule is currently being finalized for the 2004-2005 youth group season, which begins on Sunday, August 29, with a Pool Party at the Franklin YMCA from 5:00pm until 8:00pm. Be sure to check the Youth Group Web Site at <http://www.bccyouth.org> for the latest information!

We hope you and your family have a great summer, and look forward to seeing you in the fall!

YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULES

SCOOTERS • VOYAGERS PATHFINDERS • OMEGAS

June 6 Youth Group Cook-Out, 3:00pm-7:30pm

Bennett's Creek Park, Shelter #2

August 29 Youth Group Pool Party, 5:00pm-8:00pm

Franklin YMCA

ALPHAS

June 6 Youth Group Cook-Out, 3:00pm-7:30pm

Bennett's Creek Park, Shelter #2

June 25-26 Overnight Lock-In, time and details TBA

August 29 Youth Group Pool Party, 5:00pm-8:00pm

Franklin YMCA

For more detailed information about your group's schedule, please contact your group's leaders.

Youth Group Cook-Out

Sunday, June 6, 2004
3:00pm-7:30pm

Bennett's Creek Park, Shelter #2

All food and drink provided
Children's playground available

Softball • Kickball • Volleyball • Fishing
Badminton • Football • Tennis
Frisbee • Horseshoes • Nature Walking

See flyer for directions to Bennett's Creek Park and more information
In the event of rain, Cook-Out will be moved to Graham Hall

Youth Coordinator's Corner

by David Salerno

For the past two months, I have been talking about what I consider to be the three essential elements of a successful youth fellowship program: fun enjoyable activities, church and community projects, and practical Christian instruction.

Last month, I briefly talked about the last two elements—church and community projects, and practical Christian instruction—and how I feel that these two elements give a youth program its character and content, bringing substance to our program and giving us our unique identity as a Christian youth fellowship program.

I went into detail about church and community projects, listing over a dozen projects the youth have participated in over the past 6 months, and how these projects helped our youth to put their faith into action.

This month, I would like to wrap up this series by talking about the third essential element of a successful youth fellowship program—practical Christian instruction.

The term “practical Christian instruction” means different things to different people, and can be presented in a number of different styles, each with the potential to be very effective if used in the proper environment. The key to success is properly matching the style of instruction to the environment in which it is used.

For example, a “lecture” style of instruction may be very effective in a Bible study environment, but may fail in an inner-city ministry program. And while an “entertainment” style of instruction may be effective in an outreach ministry, it would most likely fail in a Sunday School program.

So, what style of Christian instruction is the most effective in a relational youth fellowship program such as ours here at Bethlehem?

It is my belief that an “experiential” style of instruction, where lessons learned are linked to and reinforced by activities and experiences, is the most effective style for a relational youth fellowship program. This “hands-on” style of learning allows youth to learn not just by **hearing**, but also by **doing**.

The materials used by The Youth Groups at Bethlehem—the Pioneer Clubs materials for children age 2 through 5th grade, and devotional materials from Group Publishing, Youth Specialties, and other sources for Jr. and Sr. High youth—all help promote this “experiential” style of learning.

This style of learning is nothing new. Most of us probably remember singing fun Bible songs such as “Father Abraham” as a child, and many of us still remember the words to these songs even today. By linking the words to music and physical motion, the **experience** became indelibly marked in our minds, helping us to remember the spiritual message behind the songs throughout our lives.

Let me share with you with what I feel is a perfect example of practical Christian instruction in action that, as an Alpha Youth Group leader, I had the privilege to be a part of.

Last November, the Jr. and Sr. High youth participated in separate Food Scavenger Hunts to benefit our Food Pantry here at Bethlehem.

The youth were divided into teams, and each team was given \$20 and about 30 minutes to go to Food Lion, buy as much food as they possibly could, and return to church.

Points were awarded for each item purchased, and bonus points were awarded to the team with the most items, the team with the heaviest total purchase, and teams with purchases meeting various other “scavenger hunt” criteria.

After tallying their scores and a winner determined, the teams put their purchases in the Food Pantry closet. Between both groups, over \$175 of food items weighing over 150 pounds were donated to the Food Pantry.

To close the Jr. High scavenger hunt, I discussed the following verse with the youth:

“...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

—Matthew 5:16 (NIV)

We discussed how others, including our peers, watch us every day. And, often, it isn't what we say, but rather what we do, that speaks the loudest.

We discussed how difficult it can be at times to personally witness to others, especially our peers. But we're reminded by this verse that sometimes our actions can be our most powerful witness to others. The youth were reminded that, because of the good things that they do in the church and in the community, such as the Food Scavenger Hunt, others can see God through us. The group then closed in prayer.

Although only about 5 minutes was actually spent in discussion, the connection between the activity, the mission project, and the Bible verse study created an experience—a “life lesson”—that was more powerful and effective than an hour of lecturing could ever be.

There are so many great examples—the Scooters and Voyagers delivering hand-drawn valentines to nursing home residents, the Pathfinders going on a trail hike, the Omegas taking homemade stew to our shut-ins, and many more—of our youth leaders teaching by example, and our youth learning by doing. I am so thankful that we have such a great team of dedicated, creative, and passionate youth leaders that work so hard to create positive experiences and teach our children lessons that last a lifetime.

Next month, I will talk about the importance of maintaining balance in a youth fellowship program.

Until then, God bless,

