

# Preparing the Church for the Future Through Intentional Youth and Family Ministry

A Senior Project Presented to  
The Faculty of Concordia University Ann Arbor  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts  
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May, 2009

Imagine this, it is Sunday morning and, as is your routine, you get up early to get ready for church. After a shower, quick breakfast, and brushing your teeth you head out the door and take off, hoping to make it in time for the 8:30 a.m. service. You get in the door and manage to slip in the back pew during the last verse of the first hymn. You grab the first hymnal in front of you to try to sing the last bit and realize that the letters are in large print. After you get settled in your seat you start to observe things. The bulletin has an announcement that the quilting group will be meeting on Wednesday night. Right next to that you see the prayer request list, a long list of people in the hospital and nursing homes. This is also the first time you have heard the phrase “Worship for Shut-Ins” before. What does that mean? After all of this, you look around and notice that you are in the minority in this church. It is hard to believe it, but you are one of the youngest people at this congregation, and one of the few without gray or white hair.

### **Introduction**

This may be a bit of an exaggeration but how often does something like this happen? Sadly this is happening more and more in our church, especially in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS). That raises the question: Where have all the young people gone? This project is intended to point out what is happening right now and what we can do about it. There is a need to reduce the trend of getting older as a church body. So, how do we keep our church from growing old and dying out?

In this project I will give conclusive evidence that shows the LCMS decline, shift of population, and the steps we need to take to bring more youth into the church. Research shows that the average age of an LCMS member is gradually increasing.

What does that say about our Synod? This project addresses that issue with the belief that the number of youth is decreasing. I will use data gathered from the LCMS headquarters, through interviews, and surveys to provide a possible solution to our dilemma. If we work to extend children and youth ministry to an intentional involvement of marriage and family education as the focus of faith formation then, as a Synod, we will grow and thrive.

### **A Dying Church**

The church today has a problem that it, in large part, has never had to deal with before. Statistics show that the church is getting older as a whole. According to George Wuthnow, author of the book, *After The Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*, the average age of mainline congregations is 52 years old and the average age of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is 62. LCMS membership has been stuck at around 2.5 million for 25-30 years (Wuthnow). There has not been any growth in our population.

The new generation, which is considered the current generation at this point in time, that ranges anywhere from seven years old to twenty-five is called the Mosaic Generation. Over the course of this current generation, the proportion of young people who are not affiliated with church has gone from one in eleven to one in five. Let's say that the average high school has 2,000 students. That would mean that out of those 2,000 students, 400 of them would not consider themselves affiliated with any church.

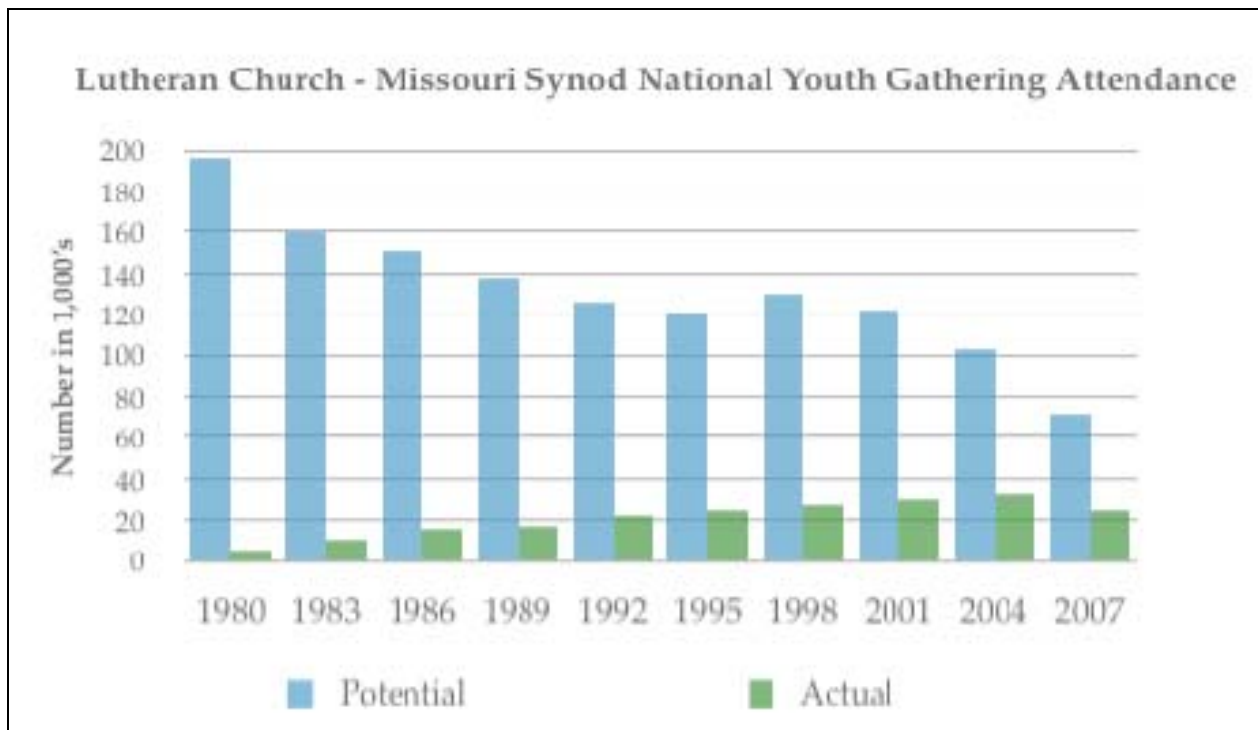
It isn't just the teens that aren't showing up to church. What about the teens that are going to church? There are a lot of teens that still attend worship on a regular basis and are active in the church.

[There is] a pronounced growth in the notion among young people that involvement in organized religious activity is optional and, in many cases, of no personal value . . . Millions of teenagers are involved in church-related activities each week but their motivation is relational rather than spiritual. Once their relational networks change upon graduation from high school and college, we expect a continued decline in church attendance among the emerging generation unless churches revamp their ministries to reflect the unique cultural customs and expectations of a new breed of young people. (Dittmer)

The teens that do go to church do it because it is where their friends are. Most teens are not getting spiritually fed at church and church activities because these events are seen as social events. With this attitude, once the social network is gone so is the importance of church involvement. This is evident when you look at the statistics of those out of high school. There is a drop off that occurs from high school and into the college years. The percentage of people in their forties that go to church in America today is around 46% and the percentage of people in their twenties that go to church is around 29% (Wuthnow). The typical young person who leaves the church will come back – that is, if they choose to come back – once they are married and have a family of their own. Our church is rapidly growing older with little to no evidence that it is reversing this trend. These are some huge problems. With this kind of information, it would be logical to conclude that the church, specifically speaking the LCMS, could become extinct.

How do we fix this problem? A common response might be that we need to improve our youth ministry. We must be losing our kids because the youth ministry isn't exciting enough for them. Well, that could potentially be something worth working towards, but it is not the ultimate issue. According to the National Study of Youth and Religion, the retention rates of the LCMS for keeping our youth are at 86%. As a matter

of fact, the National Study of Youth and Religion states that the LCMS is one of the church bodies that does the best at retaining its youth. There were numbers put out by the LCMS that show the statistics of the National Youth Gathering that happens every three years.



The data shows that in 1980, the potential number of youth that could attend in the LCMS was around 196,000 and only about 5,000 youth actually showed up. That was a time when youth ministry needed to be updated. The most recent National Youth Gathering in 2007 shows that there were around 25,000 youth that showed up. That is a great increase in number, but wait, there is more. Although there were about 25,000 youth who attending, the potential number of youth that could attend was at around 71,000. We are getting a greater percentage, which is great, but it is because we don't have many youth left. In twenty years the potential number of youth in the LCMS has been cut down by more than half, going from 196,000 to 71,000 (Dittmer). What do

those numbers say when we apply them to youth ministry? Maybe we won't need youth ministers in another twenty years. It's not that we aren't getting them to church; the problem is that they aren't there period. So in order to bring more youth in and reverse this trend, we may need to rethink our philosophy of youth ministry. In this paper I will look at the current generation, by examining their characteristics and statistics, so that we can better understand who we are trying to reach. When we understand who we are trying to reach, we will be able to find a better way to reach them.

### **The Mosaic Generation**

Before we get too deep into this, it is important and beneficial to take a look at this generation that we are trying to reach. This current generation has been given many different names, but the title that will be used in this paper is the Mosaic Generation. There have been studies done concerning past generations, such as the Builders, Baby Boomers, and Generation X, but no generation has been studied as much as the Mosaics. You are a member of the Mosaic Generation if you were born between the years 1984 and 2002. This generation is one that is widely studied and analyzed. Many different pollsters and sociologists who have the job of studying this generation have assigned characteristics to this generation.

There are positive and negative characteristics of the Mosaic Generation. The Mosaic Generation has been described as being optimistic about the future, less materialistic than previous generations, more racially and ethnically integrated, having more trust in authorities, and is also reversing bad behavioral trends of previous generations. They have been seen as more visual and kinesthetic learners who value family, friends, and education. They have also been described as people who pursue

personal satisfaction and have lives that are not compartmentalized. The negative characteristics of the Mosaic Generation are that they are more dependant on peer support, with increased conformity and cooperation emphasized over individual creativity. They lead overbooked, extremely stressful lives and choose to live that way (Oppel).

George Barna has a list of the Six S's of Mosaics that he lists in his book *Generation Next*. These Six S's say that they are serious about life, stressed out, self-reliant, skeptical, survivors, and highly spiritual ("Generation Next" 18-21). With all of these characteristics in mind it is easy to understand why the campaign run by Barack Obama in the 2008 election was a big draw for young voters. He had intangible promises and slogans that used words like "change", "hope", and "believe". It should be no surprise that in that election 66% of under-30's, 54% of young white voters, and 71% of first-time voters supported Obama.

### **The Faith and Spirituality of a Mosaic**

As we are working towards a solution for our dying church, we need to understand the spiritual characteristics and statistics of the Mosaic Generation. If there needs to be growth in the church it needs to come from this generation. Do teens value spirituality and faith in today's culture? Statistics tell us that 65% of teens believe in the God of the Bible, 87% believe that Jesus was a real person, 85% believe that prayer can bring about change, and 71% believe Christianity is relevant to their lives. The Barna Group reports that three-quarters of teenagers say they pray in a typical week, nearly half say they attend worship regularly, and roughly one-third say they read the

Bible, attend Youth Group, attend Sunday School, and participate in small groups (The Barna Group, "What Teenagers Look for in Church").

It sounds like the current generation is pretty spiritual. What kind of spirituality is it though? It is reported that only 44% of teens believe in Jesus' resurrection, 53% believe Jesus sinned during his lifetime, and two-thirds of Mosaics believe that salvation does not depend on Jesus. Let's look through some of those numbers again: 96% believe in God, 87% believe Jesus was a real person, 71% say that Christianity is relevant to their lives. Those statistics sound pretty encouraging, right? With all of that correct thinking, how come two-thirds of the same group believe that Jesus isn't necessary for salvation? Something is happening that gets these Mosaics to believe in God, Jesus, and Christianity, but ignore the fact that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Christian Smith, a researcher for the National Study of Youth and Religion, has given a name to this new religion that has appeared in the Mosaic Generation. After extensive research through interviews and observation of teens, he has named this religious movement Moral Therapeutic Deism. This is a religion that is a blend of many religious ideas mixed with moral values and beliefs. Smith has given characteristics to Moral Therapeutic Deism that helps describe it. In this religion a person believes that a God exists that created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth. In Moral Therapeutic Deism God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and other world religions. It also says that the central goal in life is to be happy and feel good about oneself (Smith, "On 'Moralistic Therapeutic Deism'"). These teachings, although they sound appealing, are a danger to the church. Even though the Mosaic Generation is considered spiritual and interested in faith, that

spirituality is often misguided and skewed to ignore the core beliefs and truths of Christianity. As you can see, spirituality is an important aspect of life for teens. The foundation is set for us to use as youth ministers. These teens desire a spiritual life, but that desire can often lead to a misunderstanding of what true faith is.

The problem isn't just teens and their misguided or non-existent spirituality. There is an interesting thing that happens after these "spiritual" teens get into their twenties. Once these teens become twentysomethings they lose that interest in spirituality and faith. "In total, six out of ten twentysomethings were involved in a church during their teen years, but have failed to translate that into active spirituality during their early adulthood" (The Barna Group, "Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years"). This disengagement happens once these teens become twentysomethings, who are considered the most spiritually independent and resistant age group in America. All of the things that these teens were known for – studying the Bible, participating in small groups, church attendance, and volunteering to help churches – drops dramatically once they reach their twenties. The Barna Group reports that 61% of today's young adults had been churched at one point during their teen years, but now they are spiritually disengaged. Don't you think youth ministry should have prepared these young adults to continue their faith into their twenties?

The question then becomes, who is responsible for nurturing the spiritual growth of these teens? The response up until recent times has been that the church has been given these responsibilities. The one thing that really sticks out about this generation is their relationship to family. Family relationships are something that are valued by the

Mosaic generation. According to research, 78% of teens say that parents have a lot of influence in their lives, while 34% say teachers have a lot of influence and 27% say pastors have a lot of influence (“Real Teens” 73). These things should be considered while deciding who is responsible for nurturing faith in youth. The answer should be clear that the reigns of spiritual teaching and nurturing should be taken out of the hands of the church and given to the parents, but are the parents ready for it?

### **The Mosaic’s Family Structure**

As said before, family is a very important part of a Mosaic’s life. Family is important in a person’s life because it is the basic social structure that all of us are born into. Parents are the heads of this social structure and are there to teach their children how to interact and succeed in society. How is the institution of the family holding up these days? Did you know that four out of five adults are married or have been married? Recent numbers say that one out of three married adults has been divorced before. Other statistics say that 25% of Americans over the age of 18 have gone through a marital split and these numbers aren’t dramatically different among evangelicals (The Barna Group, “New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released”). There are plenty more statistics that give some insight into what kind of condition the family is in and what kind of example the Mosaic Generation is being given. In the United States 50% of all marriages end in divorce, 33% of mothers are unmarried, 30% of families are single-parent families, almost 4.5 million couples are currently cohabiting, and more than one million children are affected by divorce every year. Does this sound like a sound social structure to you? In Chap Clark’s book, *Hurt*, he talks about this and gives a quote from a high school student:

My parents divorced when I was seven years old. I live in two houses, switching every two days. My parents get mad at me when I need to go to the other house because I forgot something. I get so angry because no one ever asked me if it was okay with me having to keep track of which house my schoolbooks are at. No one ever asked me if I wanted to split my life in two! (Clark, 108)

These failures in the family are becoming the norm in our society. There have been consequences to these family failures. There begins to develop a distance between family members when these issues occur in the family. There already is a generational gap between children and their parents and, as Walt Mueller puts it in his book *Understanding Today's Youth Culture*, "if we, as parents, don't make an effort to close the (generational) gap, it will continue to widen" (Mueller, 5).

### **The Church Has Fallen Short**

It is easy to say that the family is the only thing that has failed but the church has failed too. The church isn't teaching its core beliefs effectively and as a result, we have families that do not fully understand the faith. There is a popular phrase that Ben Freudenburg uses in his book, *The Family Friendly Church* that says that it takes a village to raise a child. Freudenburg refers to a world where the community works together to help in the best interest of the child. He then says that this world doesn't exist anymore for three reasons.

Three reasons, I think. (1) The community and the culture are shaping the church rather than the church shaping the community and the culture; (2) Churches have become islands unto themselves - developing into the equivalent of "gated communities" - and forgotten about the impact Christ wants them to have on their surrounding world: to be salt and to reflect his light; (3) The world has grown a lot more complicated, and the church has been unwilling to risk entering into kids' reality through open, honest discussions about their moral choices and behavior. (Freudenburg, 90)

The church's role is to support the parents, through programs and education, as parents model Christian living and work to pass on the Christian faith to their children. The church has begun to let other people take over this role and it has not worked out. The church needs to reestablish its role as a support to the family that helps form and shape the family with Biblical principles. When parents work together with a church to prepare and sustain family relationships based on Biblical principles and continually grow in their faith and knowledge of the Bible, then they are better equipped to be successful in their marriages and other family relationships. When the church does not support the family, the family cannot be a firm support and model for our youth that has a strong Biblical foundation to build on.

### **Changes in the Approach to Ministry**

So then, how do we use all of this information that we have gone through throughout this paper? It is important to use this information to better understand who the Mosaic Generation is and what they value. When we understand these characteristics and values, we can determine how they affect their faith and spirituality and get to the root of the problem of our aging church.

Doug Fields is a Youth Pastor who has been in the ministry for a very long time. He has written several books and in his book, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, he writes this insight about youth ministry:

Youth workers are becoming increasingly aware that a student-only youth ministry is less effective than a family-friendly context, we often underestimate the power of the family. Each student in our youth ministry is the product of a unique family system, a system responsible for forming beliefs, values, and actions. If we plan to effectively minister to students over the long haul, we must sincerely desire to minister to entire families,

because a youth ministry that excludes parents is about as effective as a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage. (Fields, 251)

So basically he is saying that, in order to be successful, you need to include the family in your youth ministry. This is a step in the right direction but there needs to be more than just that. There is a whole chain of things that need to happen in order for the church to grow. In order to grow the church we need to reach the youth. In order to reach the youth we need to impact the family. When do we start impacting the family? How do we start impacting the family?

### **Understanding the Family System**

Doug Fields is right in saying that involving the family is important in creating a youth ministry that has an impact. The intentional involvement of family with youth needs to be practiced more in the church today, but it should not stop there. Just like with so many other things, we cannot impact the family without fully understanding the dynamics of the family system and how it functions.

The Systems Framework is an approach to family that states that the family is a system, and if something is not working in that system, then the whole system doesn't work. The focus and assumptions of this framework state that all parts of the system are interconnected. It is impossible for the system to be separated and continue to work. Each part of the system affects everything else in the system. In order to understand the system you need to view the system as a whole. Individual parts of the system do not tell the whole story of the system itself. The focus of the Systems Framework also says that the behavior of the system affects and is affected by its

environment. If something isn't right in the family, as a system the family won't work (White and Klein, 122-123).

Another approach to understanding family dynamics that coincides with the Systems Framework is the Symbolic Interaction Framework. In this framework it is believed that all roles in society are learned through family interaction. Without the interaction and relationships within the family then the roles each person has in society are confused. We learn how to exist and survive in society through the social cues and roles we learn in our own family systems. These are both important to understand and apply because it shows how much of an impact the family makes on an individual (White and Klein, 63-65).

Where does this family system start? Families start with a couple who has decided to take that step forward and have kids. In order to really impact the family we need to go back a little further. Typically families start off with a couple getting married. There is a lot of work that is done to make marriages work, that most people are not aware of. According to research and clinical observations discussed in Olson and DeFrain's textbook, *Marriages and Families*, there are a number of recommendations for developing a meaningful and vital marriage relationship:

- You should establish yourself in your chosen profession before making a marriage commitment
- Remember marriage is not for everyone. Family members and friends should recognize this and not pressure anyone who has chosen the single life into getting married.
- You should be encouraged to relate openly and honestly rather than to play traditional dating/mating games.
- You and your partner should spend 1 year in high-quality premarital counseling before you marry.
- You should establish a strong and viable marriage relationship before you have children.

- The decision of parenthood should be made jointly, and it is best if it follows the decision to marry.
- You should be creative and flexible in your roles and mutual responsibilities, not only during the initial phase of marriage but throughout the life cycle. (Olson and DeFrain, 349-350)

Premarital counseling is a good place to start when it comes to youth ministry.

Premarital counseling prepares couples for marriage by giving them the skills to handle the ups and downs of a lifetime commitment. It is so vital to the health of the couple and their future family that they lay down the foundation for a successful marriage and family right at the beginning. When marriages drift apart they can be for a variety of reasons, but one of the major reasons is that the couples begin to take marriage for granted and focus on other priorities in their lives. A typical premarital counseling program combats this because it helps a couple explore their relationship strength and growth areas, increase their communication skills, learn how to resolve couple conflict, discuss their families of origin and what they want to bring, or not bring, from their families into their couple relationship, develop a workable budget and financial plan, and develop their personal, couple, and family goals (Olson and DeFrain, 336).

The church has a good opportunity to be intentional about their marriage and family ministry. Most engaged couples want to get married in a church, whether they are active in a church or not. The church can make premarital counseling a requirement for getting married in their building. The church's role can be to provide the premarital counseling backed by Biblical understandings of marriage and family relationships. This support would continue throughout a couple's relationship to help strengthen and encourage them in their marriage.

The family system is not always a nuclear family. There are situations where you can't go back in time, get the parents the proper premarital counseling, and fix everything. Single-parent families, stepfamilies, binuclear families, and any other type of families are not left out of this intentional ministry. When we face this situation it is important to work with what we can. Parenting is an important issue that both nuclear and non-nuclear families struggle with and should be intentionally addressed. True parenting isn't practiced as much as it should be in our society today. A poll done by Time/CNN in 2001 says that 80% of parents felt that children are more spoiled today than 10 to 15 years ago. Seventy-five percent of parents felt their children did fewer chores. Over two-thirds of the parents felt that children today are somewhat to very spoiled. Seventy-one percent of parents felt that children are exposed to too much advertising, which increases their desires for things (Olson and DeFrain, 372).

There is evidence that children today are not as disciplined as they have been in previous generations. The authoritative style of parenting is one where the parents establish clear rules and expectations and discuss them with the child (Olson and DeFrain, 366). This type of parenting is not practiced today. There is more of an uninvolved or permissive style of parenting that can have negative effects on the child. There is this need for teens to have parents involved in their lives, but the parents are neglecting to pick up that responsibility. Since there is no solid support system at home, teens are forced to create their own world and fictive kin. Chap Clark refers to this new society created by teens as "the world beneath." This world is a separate society where those inside it do not learn the proper social cues or roles that are picked up in a family.

I asked the following question point-blank during the study: "Do you wish you had a closer relationship with your parents?" For the vast majority of

students, this was not an easy question to answer, and so they tended to fudge. Grudgingly, most said something like, “Yes, I guess I would like to be closer...*but*...” The various qualifiers that followed would not come as a surprise to anyone: “they are always on my back,” or “they don’t know how to listen or how to be a friend.” I found that unless they viewed the relationship as irreparably fracture, they answered affirmatively. (Clark, 109-110)

The Barna Group gives us another example of uninformed and uneducated parenting in an article entitled, *Christian Parents Are Not Comfortable With Media But Buy Them for Their Kids Anyway*. In this article it explains how parents are going against instincts and purchasing media material for their kids even though they had concerns about the content. This is just information given for Christian homes surveyed. If there are Christian parents giving their children content that they question then what kind of material is given by non-Christian parents? Parenting isn’t seen as much of a priority anymore so these parents are becoming neglectful. When proper parenting isn’t practiced then these parents are failing to provide a solid foundation for their children to grow up in. That is why this plan also includes parenting classes and couples therapy. There are too many couples going into parenting without all of the proper instruction and information. The church is a perfect place to provide these services to the parents, or at least help them find one in the community to use.

### **Solution to Revive the Dying Church**

With all of this taken into account, there is a solution for the lack of young people in our church. The solution needs to be one that includes the family, but not just when the child hits confirmation age. Ultimately, this proposed idea is a new definition of youth ministry. Up to this point in time there has not been much talk of youth ministry as

a ministry that exists beyond a certain number of years. The LCMS has a vision for their youth ministry that says this:

Our vision for Youth Ministry brings young people and adults together as a community of God's people where . . .

- Jesus Christ is the central focus in celebrating in Word and Sacrament (Colossians 3:16-17)
- Youth develop significant relationships with their peers and caring adults (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)
- Young people grow in faith, their personal relationship with Christ and who they are as God's people (Ephesians 3:16-19)
- Youth can ask hard questions and find answers about faith and life (2 Timothy 3:14-17, Matthew 7:7)
- Confession, absolution and unconditional love are the hallmarks of Christian community (Ephesians 4:32)
- Young people join in worship, nurture, service, outreach and fellowship activities (1 Timothy 4:12, Acts 2:42-47)
- Young people know that they are accepted (Romans 15:5-7)
- Young people are able to serve in meaningful ways in the church and in the world (2 Corinthians 9:12)
- Youth can use their gifts to the glory of God (1 Peter 4:10, Romans 12:4-8)

As you can see, this is a list of things that are very important but they do not include family at all. This definition of youth ministry puts a lot of the work on the church as the main nurturer of faith. As this paper has proven, the best place for faith formation and nurturing is the home. The home needs to be a better place and that is where the church can step in. We need to rethink the way youth ministry is done and give it a new definition. It is a holistic approach that does not start at confirmation and end at high school graduation. Youth ministry is the encouragement and development of faith formation in youth with an intentional involvement of the family, with the parents as primary faith nurturers. Since parents are viewed as the primary faith nurturers in their children, youth ministry begins with the preparation that the parents put into their marriages and parenting.

## **The New Program**

This approach to youth ministry would require the church to run a slightly different program that is more intentional than what they are doing now. The different ministries of a church would need to work together to accomplish this task. The church would need to offer services for premarital counseling, parenting/step-parenting classes, and couples counseling. Within these programs, in addition to the actual content of the classes, there would need to be an involvement and interaction with scripture. Parents and young couples would be taught how to articulate and practice their faith in their lives, to each other, and to their children.

The Sunday school program would need to change, giving homework to the kids to work through with their parents during the week. In this system, confirmation wouldn't be a rite of passage. Confirmation would need to be an instructional program that includes parents with mandatory homework for the parents and kids to work on together. As radical as this may sound, in this system it would be possible to fail confirmation. If part of the church's role is to encourage and support faith nurturing then they would need to make these things mandatory. Finally, in senior high ministry the parents would stop being faith nurturers and become faith mentors. At this point a teen has gone through the whole system and has been confirmed. Parents would have to be mentors because their children are now responsible for their own spiritual life. This would be a big step that would need to be addressed in parenting classes to help parents adjust to that role. As a faith mentor a parent would become a sounding board and someone that gives advice. When a high school student graduates, the church and the parents would work together to help the student find a church close to where that

student is going to have a job or go to school. At this time, the church would continue contact through something like care packages or postcards. The parent would continue being that faith mentor throughout the rest of their child's life, with support and encouragement from the church.

### **Conclusion**

The family is the center for faith formation and with a strong support system, faith, and knowledge of scripture the parents are fully prepared to be the leaders. The church needs to be active in this support system by strengthening the family and being a resource with which to work. The new definition of youth ministry does not put the focus of the ministry on the church. This new definition puts the responsibility in the hands of the parents, who have been properly equipped to have strong, healthy marriages and be competent, authoritative, caring, faith-nurturers for their children based on solid, Biblical principles. This new youth ministry would be one that requires church workers who are equipped to deal with the entire family system. The family system is what impacts each individual family member and prepares him or her for his or her role in society. The most competent youth worker, under this definition would be one that makes family ministry the priority. Family ministry would include everything from premarital counseling to parenting, from dealing with life changes to dealing with grief and loss. When we prepare families to succeed, even from the very beginning, we are giving that youth a better chance at life and faith formation.

Ultimately, a youth minister should understand that when he or she sees a couple preparing for marriage, the minister is helping that couple survive the odds stacked against them, but also ministering to their future children. Even if you can't see

that child now, the ministry to the parents to build a successful marriage and family is one that will impact that child for a lifetime. A new approach to youth ministry would not be guaranteed to change everything, but it would at least work to give families and youth a greater chance to succeed.

This new family structure is put into place with the purpose of becoming a center for faith formation and nurturing. With this influence from family that is supportive, the youth keep those values and carry them through life. Faith is something that is passed on from parents to their children and this is what will keep the church going and keep those twentysomethings in church. The founder of the Lutheran Church, Dr. Martin Luther, wrote a book entitled *Luther's Small Catechism*, which is a way to share the doctrines and beliefs of the church. Luther begins each instructional section with the words, "As the head of the family should teach in a simple way to his household" (Luther, 5). Luther knew where the teaching of the faith really needed to happen. When all of these things are done efficiently and effectively then that couple can stand and proclaim for certain that, "as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." (New International Version, Joshua 24:15)

### Glossary of Terms

**Baby Boomer Generation** - term coined to describe the generation of people born from 1946-1964, years somewhat disputed but remain in that general range

**Binuclear Family** - a family where one ex-spouse does not drop out of the family after divorce and the two households continue to interrelate

**Builder Generation** - term coined to describe the generation of people born from 1920-1945, years somewhat disputed but remain in that general range

**Family system** - one of the four major components of the sociocultural context in which families live; focuses on the interconnectedness of family members

**Fictive Kin** - A term used to refer to individuals that are unrelated by either birth or marriage, who have an emotionally significant relationship with another individual that would take on the characteristics of a family relationship.

**Generation X** - term coined to describe the generation of people born from 1964-1983, years somewhat disputed but remain in that general range, sometimes referred to as Baby Busters

**LCMS** - The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

**Moralistic Therapeutic Deism** - term coined by Christian Smith and researchers at the National Study of Youth and Religion which describes a system of belief that states that 1. "A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth." 2. "God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions." 3. "The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself." 4. "God does not need to be particularly

involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem." 5. "Good people go to heaven when they die."

**Mosaic Generation** - Term coined to describe the generation of people born from 1984 - 2002, years somewhat disputed but remain in that general range, often referred to as Generation Y or Millennials

**Nuclear Family** - a kinship group in which a husband, a wife, and their children live together in one household: also called a conjugal family system

**Single-Parent Family** - family that has only one parent present in the household

**Stepfamily** - the family created when one or both partners in a marriage have a child or children from a previous marriage

**Symbolic Interaction Framework** - a conceptual framework that focuses on the internal perceptions of family members and examines how they learn roles and rules in society through interaction and shared meaning

**Systems Framework** - a conceptual framework that focuses on all of the parts of the system as an interconnected whole where each part of the system affects the rest of the system

**The World Beneath** - a term coined by Chap Clark in his book *Hurt* that describes the separate and highly structured social system that midadolescents have created in response to systematic abandonment by their parents and other authorities

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