

The Lakeview Lamp

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." - Psalm 119:105

July 2, 2006

An Effective Youth Program

Norman E. Fultz

Let me tell you about a church and a program it offered for its youth which seems to have met with no small degree of success. But before we look at the youth program, maybe we should consider why we need to discuss it.

You see, it is felt by many that if youth are to be reached by the church, the church must engineer special programs and activities that will appeal to them. In some cases, the idea is that a special youth minister is needed to keep the youth involved. He is to be as one with them and at the same time be an organizer of all sorts of special outings and activities.

In some cases it is thought the youth should be loosely organized so as to be properly represented as a group to the elders (somewhat like the student council in a high school). The elders, thus always duly counseled by the youths' representative, can be sure to provide for all their "needs." The responsibility of parents to provide activities of a social nature for the children with other youth is relieved as the church assumes it. So, in the mad rush for youth programs in recent years, the one I want to tell you about has often been shoved aside with little or no consideration. Some have thought of it as outmoded.

Surely you can now see why I considered it worthwhile to discuss the effective youth program of my home congregation. However, before giving the specifics of the youth program, let me tell you a bit about that church be-ginning with my earliest memories.

The country meeting house was a modest, white frame structure situated on a small plot, donated I think by one of the older members, adjoining the grammar school grounds. The building was one large room filled with pews made from slats of wood about two inches wide and placed about one inch apart, a design that made for a fair degree of discomfort. Arranged in three rows plus a few in the Amen corner, the pews provided a seating capacity of perhaps 200. Heating was by a large coal-burning stove over in one corner. This allowed for much togetherness of the first two or three families to arrive on cold and inclement days as all sought to get close to the heater until it turned red hot and its heat began to radiate into the room. (The heat never seemed to reach the far corners.) Summer cooling was provided by raised windows and an ample supply of fans from a funeral home in town. Especially handy were those fans during the annual "big meetin" held in late summer.

Services may not always have begun right "on time" since people came from every direction in that part of the county by whatever means of travel at their disposal and over roads that were dusty in summer and often deeply mud-rutted in winter. But when every one who seemed to be going to make it that day was present (sometimes the cedar wood whittlers and talkers had to be "sung in"), services began. The song leader, a somewhat rotund brother whose glasses fitted low on his nose allowing him to look over the rim at the audience, would announce the hymn number in the old paper back hymnal. A sharp striking of the tuning fork against the book was followed by a discernible humming of the beginning notes up and down the scale. He was a good song leader then and continued to be as long as he lived.

One of the brothers would lead in prayer, and Bible classes would be arranged, six classes to the best of my memory — a “card class” for “little ‘uns,” a class for older women and one for older men, a class for younger youth, one for older youth, and one for young adults. Three classes across the front and three across the rear of the auditorium with only an aisle separating them. It was often easier to hear the teaching in the class across the aisle than to hear one’s own teacher. Not the most advantageous arrangement at all when considered by today’s convenient buildings with multiple, well-equipped classrooms.

The communion table was prepared with great care. A bright white cloth, starched and smoothly ironed, was spread on the table. Another equally as carefully prepared and placed, was spread over the elements of the Supper. Before communing, the brother “at the table” made a short talk about the significance of the occasion before taking the cloth by its creases and gingerly folding it and laying it to one side. That carefulness of preparation, even in my youthful observance, seemed to bespeak the reverence with which worship was to be offered.

Preaching was generally a once-a-month affair as a “part-time” preacher visited us. The one I best recall was a school teacher or principal from the adjoining county. He walked with a decided limp on his artificial right leg; and upon arriving at the pulpit, he always asked the congregation to bow as he led us in prayer. Then, of course, there were those “big meetin’s” in summer in which the meeting house would not hold everyone and many gathered near the windows outside so as to hear as they sat on car fenders or the flat beds of farm wagons that had been pulled up close.

But now, about the youth program. It was probably because of it that I became a Christian as did many of my contemporaries and those who were a bit older and those who followed after. The youth program consisted of Bible classes mentioned above, and the regular periods of worship in which all were encouraged to participate alike, whether youth or adult. It was expected that one would prepare his lesson, and the teacher did not apologize for calling upon class members to answer questions. Parents prepared their lessons complete with “daily Bible readings” and expected their children to do likewise. Discipline seemed never to be a problem.

Effective? Well, it must have been; for many obeyed the gospel; and to this day, a half century or more later, I can count numbers who have remained faithful - some becoming preachers, some elders, some marrying preachers. It was nothing special, just a church meeting in worship and service where folk seemed to realize what it was all about.

“Return, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants.” – Psalm 90:13

Family News

Anthony is now living with his mother's family.

Alex Bansemer is in Sewanee for several weeks. You can email him at alexbans@comcast.net or write him at (use four lines):

Alex Bansemer SSMF 735 University Ave Sewanee TN 37383

Norman Harber, the Lanning's son in law, was in the hospital this past week with viral meningitis (or something that looks a lot like it). He improved some on Friday and went home yesterday afternoon.

There is a new report from **Gary Hunt** in the back of the auditorium.

Sandra Hunt has received good results from a CT scan (no growth noted in mass on adrenaline gland). Will not scan again for a year. Also, she received good blood work results. She hopefully will soon start a new medicine for diabetes (which is a big improvement over older medicines).

John Jenkins, Robert's father, has lung cancer.

Jennifer Lindzy, Fran Pickens' 33-year-old granddaughter, has had cancer. Right now she is very sick. As a result of chemotherapy, she currently does not have a functioning immune system. She has an infection and is on seven very powerful antibiotics to fight it. (As we know, the immune system God made is better than the antibiotics man has made.)

Melissa Moore has moved to Chattanooga. Her phone number will be (later this week) 423-510-9431.

Address:

5506 Honeysuckle Drive Chattanooga TN 37411

Cotton Read had a new eye lens put in several weeks ago. Some stitches have been removed but two remain. His eyesight continues to improve. **Nancy** was in the hospital a few days this past week. She is now home.

Ame White saw her regular doctor on Thursday. She has improved to the point that he is not having her come back as soon as before.

Robert Wray has cataracts. Surgery on the right eye is scheduled for Thursday at 11 am. He is to return to the doctor Friday morning to get the patch removed. If all goes well he will then have surgery on his left eye.

Out of town, traveling, or visiting: **Alex Bansemer; Robert and Candy Jenkins; Nicholsons** (except for Troy); **Wootons**.

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"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).