

Making Youth Ministry Happen Even On A Small Scale

by Hillary Thurston-Cox

You could say that Jesus was a small youth group leader. Christianity started with a group of 12. However, most people think that if your youth group isn't "BIG" it can't do much. Let's rethink that!

Here are some great ways to make your youth group more effective:

#1 Include youth in **every** aspect of church life. That means that most volunteer activities that adults can do, teens can also do. For example, usher, Scripture reading, candle lighting, song leading, singing in the choir, going on the church mission trip.

#2 Include adults, older adults, and children in youth ministry. Invite the senior adult class to take the name of a student in the group to pray for and send a card to once a year. Ask non-youth leader adults to provide snacks or host a youth game night at their home. Have the youth group host a kid's night to get younger ones excited about being in youth group when they are older. Talk to your UMW to consider providing funding for youth ministry as a mission of the church (because it is!)

#3 Make a youth calendar and stick to it!!! Consult the local school calendar first to make sure you are not conflicting. There are a lot of cool things you can do on President's Day weekend when youth are off. The earlier you can get a calendar together and to parents, the more likely you are to have consistent participation. Try to keep the same times and days for the group to meet.

#4 We are United Methodist, connected in ministry. Why are we not connecting???

There are churches in the next town over, or even within the same town who would gladly join up for youth events. There are also district and conference youth events that happen every year that offer amazing opportunities for our teens and there may even be money in youth service fund to cover the cost!

#5 Behold the power of Church Camp! If the only thing your church can do to encourage youth is to send them to camp...that's great. Studies show they will get more in a week of camp than a year of Sunday school.

Resources:

I highly recommend these titles to encourage small church youth ministry
Single Digit Youth Ministry: Working with Fewer Than Ten Teens by Marcey Balcomb.
Five Minute Devotions for Youth Ministry by Jenny Baker.

Both available on Amazon.com.