

Youth group and community youth work



You youth leaders do an outstanding job! I think it is great with what passion and commitment you often fight Saturday after Saturday for children and teenagers in your age groups!

Congratulations!

How you try to make disciples of them in a very experiential and imaginative way, and how you struggle to ensure that they develop as strong and healthy disciples. I congratulate you on this exemplary and admirable commitment.

Overview

When you work and fight with such total concentration and all your strength, however, there is a danger lurking. The namely that one loses the overview and sees only himself and thinks, one fights alone on a wide field. It was similar to what happened to Elijah. Totally he threw himself into the fight. He spared nothing. In a tired phase he reckoned to God: I alone am able, qualified, and enthusiastic for you. God must correct him: there are others beside you. I value them too.

Let this be remembered: others besides you are striving in their own way and just as passionately for children and young people.

For example, the staff in the nursery service. You laugh. What can they possibly contribute to the kingdom of God? Consider this: it is in the nursery ministry that the child experiences church for the first time! It is said that the strongest imprint happens in the first six years, that is, at the age when the children are in the nursery. Accordingly, the often disregarded nursery work has an extremely important strategic function. In the nursery the child experiences church for the first time. And what does he experience there? A comfortable atmosphere? Warm and friendly nursery staff? Always only older women or also men and also young women and men?

But in addition to you, the Sunday School staff is also committed to children. In the stage of teenagers, youth and young adults, again others are striving for the life of young people. So you are not alone. You do not have to carry the burden alone. There are others. Some others! They, too, want only one thing: to get the job done.

One goal - different ways

And all in their own way. True to their level. Sometimes there is a danger that we idolize one way, one methodology, one type. I, for example, am an action guy. There's always something that has to happen. Experiences, adventures, that's where I'm at my best. In that sense I'm a Jungschart type and fit in well with you. But not everyone is like me and you. There are young people who feel overrun when I appear with my punch. They appreciate calm, intellectual adventure, discussion,

dialogue, leisure, the arts more. But they also want to be taken seriously and accompanied in their ways. So it makes a lot of sense, and accommodates the different expressions of young people, to work in a different way in the Jungschar than it does at the teenage level or at the young adult level in the youth group.

But all want and should want one thing: To make younger!
Therefore, there are consequences to all of these considerations!

WARNING FOR EACH OTHER

This will have a favorable impact on the climate of the church youth ministry if the teams give each other the appreciation they need. Why not invite each other to a meal once in a while, even give each other a gift once in a while, and approach each other in this respectful and appreciative way. And don't forget the nursery service and Sunday school.

Accepting Otherness

Active people and high achievers are in demand and in today. They are among the most sought after. You'll find some such highly regarded rippers and leaders on the youth teams. But what would a "church world" full of doers be? The hustle and bustle would become unbearable. God does not only work through leaders. We should practice accepting and appreciating quiet young people, dreamy ones, artistically gifted ones, not-so-risk-takers, too.

Joint planning

Everyone is pulling in the same direction, we said. To make sure everyone is pulling in the same direction, joint planning makes sense. Organize one or two planning meetings per year. Agenda ideas are presented but before everything is decided. Goals are set and coordinated. For example, in 1993, the focus will be on a smooth transition from one group to the other with as little loss as possible.

Staff coordination

Sometimes a useless scramble takes place for capable potential employees. Useless because such rope-pulling usually leaves unpleasant traces. Especially in the area of collaboration, cooperation is urgently needed if one wants to achieve the common goal. Think about it: What good is it if excellent work is done by top-class people in the youth group, but it becomes dull in the teenager group? The success will be that many will drop out after the youth group. But the other thing can often be seen: thriving youth groups or teen clubs with brilliant teams. But in the area of youth groups there is a complete lull. There, too, the goal is not being met.

Be prepared to pass on staff

If youth groups are too intellectual and well-behaved, maybe it's because there's no "youth guy" on the team. You can grumble about that for a long time. The only way something will change is if a young person with appropriate gifts complements that team. Why not change the staff? An experience-oriented action type into the JG and a JG'ler into the JS. Both will broaden their horizons. Why not borrow staff for certain lean times? By all means: talk to each other about staff shortages and staff problems.

Collaboration

There's a lot of ground to cover in this area. Let's take up the nursery ministry again. Young people, teenagers, youth grievers could get involved there. The young children would get an early impression of a young, dynamic church, which is attractive for men and women. Youth Grüppler take over a JS afternoon one time to lighten the load of the JS team.

Such mutual services strengthen the sense of togetherness to an unimagined degree.

Even in the areas of evangelism and social services, cooperation can be quickly realized. A JG chops all the Christmas trees in the village. The young people's group joins in. Another helps to clean up a forest. JSers and TCers can also lend a hand there. A youth group organises a village play festival. The JG and the TC are there as helpers. Early and always, members of each group would meet each other naturally.

Prayer meetings

Tensions kept arising between a JG team and a JS team. It was decided to meet together for prayer. The friction stopped abruptly. They started praying for each other, fighting and serving each other. This is the best condition to achieve the common goal.

There is one more topic I would like to touch on specifically: Transitions. Time and time again, young people drop out between groups. That doesn't always have to be the case. How can transfers be made easier?

Transitions

Collaboration

One of the simplest means is the frequent collaboration and joint ventures mentioned earlier. In this way, children and youth get to know each other early. For example: JGers come along to the Pentecost camp and help with organisation and design. Or older youth are invited for a weekend of the TC or the JG. This is how relationships grow.

And in the area of defections, relationships are the best prevention against dropping out.

However, this is not only true in terms of JS-TC or JS-JG. Relationships are already growing in the nursery. JS workers who are present in nursery or Sunday school from time to time build bridges with children who do not yet come to JS.

1. Open House Evenings

The JG organises evenings to which TCers or Jungians are invited. In a humorous, experiential way, the Aeltern present themselves to the younger ones.

2. Taster times

During some time before the transition, the young person already visits the next higher group from time to time. The leaders accompany him. Ask how he likes it. Catch any frustrations. Stay in contact with the leaders of the next higher group and pass on feedback. This way, you gradually get used to the climate and dynamics of the new environment.

3. Mailing

Three months before Uebertritt, witty, appealing mail is sent to those coming into a new group under the motto: "Still 90 days, then ...". Perhaps combined with a competition about the new group. Two months before the Uebertritt again mail etc.

Or the group prepares a small brochure in which they introduce themselves. This is sent out some time before the transfer date.

4. Visits

A tried and true method is that of a visit. All the participants in a group fan out and visit those who are about to be converted. Some time after the transition, they are visited again and asked how they like it

5. Transition Festival

Then I propose actual Uebertritt festivals. Every year, on a very specific date, there is a big festival (similar to Confirmation).

JSers of a certain year join the TC or the JG, and TCers join the JG. People say goodbye and hello in a light-hearted, humorous way. Junior staff members may also be used at this festival.

6. Model

Role modeling is important. Where Jungschar workers attend JG regularly and enthusiastically, JSers will follow suit. Being a role model is also important in talking. How do you talk about the TC or about the JG? Depending on that, the willingness to transfer is encouraged or hindered.

7. Concept

All these suggestions are of little use if there is not a clear concept in the area of overall youth work. Which group covers what? How is the yearly division. There are various possibilities.

Leadership Responsibility

A final note:

The ultimate responsibility for all that happens in church youth ministry rests with the church leadership.

Where this responsibility, this coordination and cooperation described above is not happening, why not make the first move? First to the church leadership, then to the other groups

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Source reference:

Content: Annual focus 1993 "Community", Peter Blaser, Siegfried Nüesch, Martin Bihr, Hansruedi Tanner, Ueli Obrist, Johannes Wallmeroth, Peter Schulthess

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