



## **Issue #50: Winter 2023**



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## Editors' Note:


Train up a child in the way he should go; ***even when he is old he will not depart from it.***  
Proverbs 22:6

I pray the previous two issues of the NADCE Quarterly covering the topics of children's ministry and Confirmation ministry helped you think through ways to prepare your students for faithful adulthood. This final issue in our three-part series based on Proverbs 22:6 is all about young adult ministry. While we could have chosen any stage of adulthood with regards to this verse, young adulthood seemed like a natural choice because it is commonly a phase of life when college students, young members of the military (more on that in the Spring 2023 issue!), and other young adults become disconnected from the family of faith.

As I read through the articles for this issue, I noticed some themes that were mentioned by several of the authors. Multiple contributors mentioned the need for congregational involvement, communication between congregations, student leadership, and the challenging nature of young adult ministry that changes each semester. As you read through the wise words offered by so many faithful young adult ministry leaders in this issue, I urge you to consider those themes and how God might be calling you to implement their advice in your ministry.

On a personal note, I have been able to put Matt and Paige's advice to use since I first read their articles. They both recommended reaching out to a campus ministry or congregation near the college your student will soon attend. One of my students, a senior in high school, started inquiring about churches near the school he will attend next year. I connected him to a DCE at a nearby congregation and now he's excited to visit that church! I pray that Matt and Paige's advice will lead to a fruitful college ministry experience for that young man.

Throughout this issue, I hope you'll find that young adult ministry can take on many different forms. Special services, Orange Nation, coffee ministry, a summer spent at camp, and servant events can all be great ways to minister to the young adults in your ministry context. Allie and I desire that through this issue, you'll find encouragement and



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resources that affirm the need to reach out to college-age students with Christ's love, inspiration for ways you can begin or further develop your own young adult ministry, and learn from those who are already walking faithfully in that calling.

Soli Deo Gloria,

**Michaela Seeliger**

*Editor*



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Matt Slaybaugh

Through his service at Penn State, Matt Slaybaugh shares what works for him in campus ministry, and how the local church can get involved.

### **Orange Nation: Discipleship through Service**

Brandon Heath

Young adults serving at the LCMS Youth Gathering have a unique and powerful experience in Orange Nation. Brandon Heath gives insight into how this community is formed, and how it extends much farther than the Gathering.

### **Coffee, Campus Ministry, & Community Outreach**

Paige Edgington

At Fairmount Ministries & Coffee Co., Paige Edgington builds relationships with students and the community through an on-campus coffee shop.

### **Camp Life as College Ministry: *Journeying Together* Towards Whatever Comes Next**


Ross Owens

Outdoor ministry provides an opportunity for young adults to grow in leadership and discipleship as they serve. Ross Owens shares how NLOMA camp experience helps young adults throughout the year.

### **Young Adults are People, Too!**

Rebekah Freed

While programs and events are great, Rebekah Freed explains the need for personal connection and building individual relationships in young adult ministry.



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## **Tips and Tricks for Campus Ministries**

Rev. Dr. Kent Pierce

From more than 20 years of experience in campus ministry, Rev. Dr. Kent Pierce provides tangible ideas for those serving in ministry to college students.

## **Quarterly Question, Issue Notes**

NADCE Editors

Discover the topic for the next issue and read the latest news from the NADCE Board.



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## **Campus Ministry at Public Universities**

Matt Slaybaugh

### **The Importance of Campus Ministry**


I have been blessed for four and a half years to lead Revive Campus Ministry at Penn State. It has been a joy to walk alongside hundreds of college students and hear their stories. With students attending Penn State from over one hundred countries, I have met students from all over the world. The majority of these students come from parts of the world where they face religious persecution.

The blessings of leading a campus ministry come in many different forms. In my experience, the biggest blessing of campus ministry is seeing students take initiative and ownership of the ministry. We have been blessed to have great student leaders and others who share the vision for campus ministry. Personally, I love doing life together with students and having fun with them. Sometimes that means going with them to get lunch or a cup of coffee, attending sporting events or concerts together, or joining them for a special event in their life. Revive has been at its strongest when there are both high levels of spiritual depth and fun. Each week we have spiritual opportunities for college students including church services, small group meetings, and our weekly gathering. The students and I have also enjoyed serving together, most notably on our spring break service trips assisting communities in need. I'll be joining some of the students in the spring on a trip to Florida for Hurricane Ian relief work.

### **Challenges**

The biggest challenge that comes with campus ministry is time management. It's a delicate balance between weekly activities and special events, planning for the future, and meeting students' unexpected or urgent needs. Through mentorship/advice, mental health support, running errands for those without a car, and more, this ministry can have unexpected time demands that often can't be planned ahead of time.

Campus ministry work is seasonal. I often joke that when students are the most available, I am the busiest. For example, when students are just arriving at school for the year during Fall Welcome Week, they aren't very busy yet, but I have plenty of things to do to



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prepare for the year. On the other hand, when students are busy studying for finals at the end of the semester, I have much more free time. Balancing these areas of busyness and rest can be a challenge.

### **Desires of a College Student**


Many college students' main desire is to find an authentic community. Penn State has over five hundred student organizations where students find their people. Unfortunately, many college students today often find community in areas outside of faith. This is a great challenge for campus ministries as they seek to keep the students' faith relevant and a priority in today's world.

### **The Needs of a Campus Ministry**

The greatest disservice to young people by congregations today is a lack of communication on their behalf. When students move to a new town to attend a college or university, it is very helpful for the student's previous congregation to notify a local congregation or campus ministry of the student's upcoming arrival. Students often make their decision about where to attend college based on factors not rooted in faith, and finding a faith community is not the first priority when arriving at school. Congregations and their leadership train up young people from birth through high school, who then often go off to colleges and universities without a proper transition. High schoolers should be prepared for the collegiate transition and how to navigate it as a Christian, and being connected to a local family of faith can be a great blessing as they navigate those transitions. Lastly, making a connection to the campus ministry with the student is critical. Campus ministries today are not receiving notice of a student of their denomination attending the university anymore. This requires the churches to share the students' names with the ministry.

### **How the Local Church Can Be Involved**

The local church can be involved in campus ministry through time and support. There are many campus ministries that take the form of a local congregation. However, I believe a campus ministry is at its best when *connected* to the local church. College students are often kept in a "bubble" of 18 - 22-year-olds. Churches provide students with the opportunity for intergenerational relationships. College students often need the wisdom and advice of faithful adults in their life. Other tangible forms of involvement can include



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making meals for students, assembling care packages for them, or hosting students over school breaks.

### **Campus Ministry Resources:**

LCMS U

<https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/national/campus-ministry>

Lutheran Campus Ministry Association

<https://www.golcma.org>

International Student Ministry

<https://www.isminc.org/>



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## Orange Nation: Discipleship Through Service

Brandon Heath

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)*

The LCMS Youth Gathering has always had young adults as part of its volunteer core. The first Gatherings had pockets of college students from a few Concordia Universities, as well as some connected to planners. Either in 1995 or 1998 (if you know the history, let me know!) they began to wear the color orange and were called Young Adult Volunteers (YAVs). In 2010, young adults that served became part of Orange Nation.


**Orange** – The color worn by the Young Adult Volunteers during the Gathering that also represents the transition they are in: a mixture of barbaric youthfulness (red) and adult wisdom (yellow).

**Nation** – United by serving others and coming together in community.

It was this community building that the Orange Nation planning team really wanted to focus on. But how?

It seems simple in hindsight, but just before the 2010 Gathering, the planning team struggled with how best to train, deploy, and support YAVs during the gathering. Days before the YAVs arrived, it was decided to organize them into teams of 12 to 20 young adults. Each team was named after the ICAO phonetic alphabet (Alfa, Bravo, Charlie...) and had two co-captains as leaders. These leaders helped with communication and led Bible studies.

Because of the formation of these new teams, young adults began to feel a sense of identity and purpose during the Gathering. The leaders went above and beyond what was asked of them, such as organizing times to eat and caring for those that were sick or felt like they didn't fit in. Teams who did not work during the Mass Event tried to sit with one another. Back at the hotel, the YAVs spent late nights together snacking, playing cards, and talking for hours. Then they'd get right back to work the next day.



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To build on the successful YAV leadership, subsequent YAV planning teams looked at ways to refine this model to help build intentional community. Squad leaders were added to bring together four to eight teams that were working in similar areas. Team names were related to the Gathering host city. Leadership recruitment and training became a priority and moved online to help leaders build community with their teams before they arrived. The Gathering has graciously provided an event at the Gathering just for YAVs, including an ice cream social and a private concert.

In non-gathering years, Orange Nation provides a Young Adult Servant Event. The event serves as a reunion for friendships that were created, as well as a way for young adults throughout the LCMS to become connected to others. A large percentage of these individuals end up serving as a YAV at the next Gathering, many applying to be in leadership.

Lifelong friendships are formed with those they serve with for just five days. Trips to visit one another are planned and some of those friendships result in bridesmaid or groomsman status. My friend Seth Moorman once said that Orange Nation is the third-best place to look for a Lutheran spouse, with Concordia Universities and Lutheran camps being the first two. Although that might not be confirmed, multiple relationships began by meeting as YAVs, which led to marriage and many more years serving Jesus together.

What was most amazing, eye-opening, and life-changing, was to see how YAVs took what they learned home. Some teams continue to meet online for Bible study on a regular basis. Others brought back ways to serve their young adult groups at their home/college church. Some stepped up in their church and began a young adult group. Still others, knowing they didn't have a large young adult population at their church, started young adult get-togethers and/or Bible studies at their college.

This is the history and movement of Orange Nation Young Adults, but many of you may be looking for practical applications for building community among young adults. In line with studies like Fuller Youth Ministry's *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love your Church* and LCMS' *7 Practices of Healthy Youth Ministry*, here are some useful tips the planning team has learned over the course of the past five Gatherings.

- **Put Young Adults in Leadership.** Most YAVs become invested because they are given leadership during the Gathering and the YAV leaders are seen as
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motivators. In congregations, this may be leading a part of a young adult ministry or another ministry altogether.

- **Provide a Welcoming Space** where young adults feel safe talking to each other about their successes and failures and where Jesus is at work in their lives. This could be a young adult group that meets regularly at church or at a member's home. For congregations that don't have a large number of young adults in attendance, it might be beneficial to team up with other churches in person or online on a regular basis.
- **Serve Your Community.** YAVs serve the high school and adult participants of the Gathering and serve the communities the Orange Nation Servant Events are held in each summer. Ask your young adults where they would like to serve in your community.
- **Find Adults who are Willing to Support and Train them.** One of the great things about the local church is how members can pour into each other. Find young adult parents, young professionals, and grandmas that are willing to walk alongside young adults.

I pray for your congregations' young adults and all our LCMS young adults as they continue to look for and find Christian community. I hope they find it where you are. They are also welcome to apply to be a YAV in 2025 and join other Young Adults on July 19-23, 2023 in Detroit for the Orange Nation Servant Event.

### Resources:

<https://linktr.ee/OrangeNationYA> - Instagram & Facebook: OrangeNationYA

### Citations:

*7 practices.* youthESource. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.youthesource.com/7-practices/>

Powell, K. E. (2016). *Growing young: Six essential strategies to help young people discover and love your church.* Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group.



*Brandon Heath (not the singer) is married to the beautiful Elisabeth Heath. He has been a DCE for 23 years - all at Christ Lutheran, La Mesa, CA. He has been part of the Young Adult Volunteer planning team for the past five LCMS Youth Gatherings and helped organize all seven Orange Nation Servant Events.*

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## Coffee, Campus Ministry, & Community Outreach

Paige Edgington

When I was praying about going into DCE Ministry, and even in school, I never imagined the possibilities that God had for me in ministry outside of the church. I have learned within my first ten years of DCE ministry that the opportunities are endless for how God can use a DCE to equip people as the Body of Christ.

My path to serving in Campus Ministry seemed to happen by accident. My husband and I moved back home to Wichita, Kansas in the Fall of 2014 after I served in the parish post-graduation for a short time. We began to attend a new LCMS church and I began working as a barista at a local coffee shop that was just getting started. I was also offered a part-time position assisting with youth ministry and the preschool program at our new church. When I started my job at the church, I kept my coffee shop job too. One of my tasks at the church was to take over a weekly Bible study at the local campus ministry center (then called the Lutheran Student Center) that the youth leader had been filling in for at the time. It was a good fit because I was just a few years removed from college and connected well with the students. I also was excited to serve this ministry in a small way because I had attended this college for a couple of years before transferring to Concordia University in Seward, NE for the DCE program. I thought, “Oh! How I would have benefited from a strong Christian community at WSU.” After a short time leading a weekly Bible study, the opportunity was presented for me to take on a more permanent role within the ministry at the Lutheran Student Center at WSU.

I have now been serving this ministry full-time since 2017. Little did I know that my years working in coffee shops would benefit the ministry. For a long time, it had been a dream to open a coffee shop in the student center. This dream, held by many others, became my dream. The vision grew, and we have been running a full-service coffee shop for the past five years as an outreach tool to connect with the University and the greater community as our doors are open to the public.



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So what does it like for a DCE to serve such a unique ministry? We are not a church. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit that started as a mission plant of the LCMS Kansas District in 1959, and now is its own independent organization and a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS. Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) are 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations that are independent of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but they operate ministry programs that foster the mission and ministry of the church. These organizations are para-church ministries that work alongside the local church to meet human, social, educational, and spiritual needs.

As a DCE for an RSO, my job is similar to a congregational DCE. I facilitate our outreach efforts to the University and Community. I recruit and provide training to our leaders and volunteers. I build relationships within our community, including current and incoming students, coffee shop staff and guests, faculty and staff at the college, and other community members. Also, I plan outreach events and activities with our leadership teams, work in a team-ministry setting with our staff to lead and accomplish our vision, and speak with local congregations to promote the ministry.

One of my favorite things to do is to spend time at the coffee shop, sometimes working as a barista to engage our customers and build relationships, “working” at a table out in the shop, engaging with our community, and preparing marketing and communications for our organization. No two days are the same, which is a lot of fun, and a bit chaotic sometimes!

There are a lot of blessings that come with campus ministry. The joy of reaching out to a generation the church has sent off to college is a huge blessing! Statistics show that many young adults walk away from church during the time of transition to college and adulthood. Barna Group Research states:

As they progress through their teen and adult years, Gen Z grows less likely to regularly attend church and prioritize faith: 19 percent of 15-year-olds meet Barna’s definition of a practicing Christian, compared to just 9 percent of 19-year-olds.” Barna defines Practicing Christians as those who: strongly agree their faith is very important in their life and have attended church at least once in the past month. (Gen Z: Volume 2, 19)


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I am honored to have the opportunity to foster an environment where young adults can stay connected or get connected to the church and grow in their Christian faith. I am blessed to have a front-row seat to the future of our church, and the future is so bright! I am grateful to witness these leaders grow in confidence to use the gifts and skills that God has given them for ministry. I am blessed to walk with students as they express their questions about faith and life, as well as their concerns about the future.

There are some unique challenges to campus ministry. One challenge is that our audience is constantly changing. The nature of a four-year university is ever-evolving. We get students in our community sometimes for just one semester at a time due to changing majors, class schedules, programs, or transfers to other universities. Sometimes we get a student involved in our ministry for several years if they stay for both Undergraduate and Graduate studies. In addition, meeting students is hard! One of the things we do every year is reach out to local congregations to encourage church leaders to send us the names of their students attending the university. Our goal in reaching out is to get them connected with our community. Even if a Pastor or DCE sends me a name, I may never get the opportunity to connect with them.

There are also challenges to serving outside of a church. One of those challenges is that our volunteer and donor base has to be bigger because RSOs work with multiple churches, but the audience is not as captive or present on a regular basis - like through weekly worship. With such a targeted ministry, helping to inspire a passion in others takes a lot of effort. I have to be intentional in sharing the importance of campus ministry, forming new connections, and growing established ones, with potential volunteers and donors. There are needs within this community that, while similar to a congregation, are different, such as fundraising and donor development, marketing and communications, and volunteer engagement.

Regardless of your current or future ministry roles, there are many ways DCEs can get involved in campus ministry, even if it's not your full-time job.



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**Here are 5 ways to get involved in Campus Ministry:**

1. Pray for your students as they head to college or their next steps after high school.
2. Pray for those serving in campus ministry.
3. Seek opportunities to connect students to campus ministries and LCMS congregations where they are headed to college.
4. Look for new college students visiting your congregation and help them get connected and plugged into your church's ministries or campus ministry.
5. Start a campus ministry at your local college! You can work with your congregation or partner with others to start a new endeavor.

**Citations:**

Group, B. (2021). *Gen Z vol 2*. Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute.



*Paige Edgington graduated from Concordia University, Nebraska in 2012 as a DCE with a degree in Theology. Paige went into ministry because she was passionate about creating a safe place for youth to grow in faith and be in community. She currently serves as Director of Outreach at Fairmount Ministries & Coffee Co. in Wichita, Kansas. This is her 6th year with the campus ministry at Wichita State University through Fairmount. She is also a board member of Lutheran Campus Mission Association (LCMA), an independent Lutheran organization that equips and provides resources to campus ministry leaders. Paige and her husband, Cooper, have an 11-year-old Cocker Spaniel named Lego. In her free time, she loves to read, go on walks and hikes, spend time with family, and enjoy coffee and conversation with friends!*

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## **Camp Life as College Ministry: *Journeying Together Towards Whatever Comes Next***


Ross Owens

While we all experience change throughout our lives, there may not be a time filled with more change and self-discovery than your college-age years. Many young adults experience a multitude of changes – from relationships and life goals to living arrangements and routines, much of their life is in transition. They are often looking for someone to help them navigate those changes. This presents an incredible opportunity to disciple a generation of Jesus followers as they seek God’s direction amidst the change.

Lutheran Outdoor Ministry has been a vital part of raising up ministry leaders and supporting churches for decades, and they are also incredibly strategic in discipling college students throughout the year. The National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association (NLOMA) is an organization of Lutheran camp professionals from across the country. Each year, NLOMA hires over 500 college-age students to serve in ministry positions at over 20 camps. The impact that a summer at camp can have on a young adult is profound. Students don’t just grow in their faith, but also develop leadership and professional skills that aid them in any vocation. Read what one counselor said about his experience at Camp Lone Star:

*“It is truly the single best way to spend your summer. ... The impact camp can have on you as a camper pales in comparison to the impact it can have on you as a counselor. God works through amazing ways, and camp is a front row seat to that... I came into camp thinking I knew everything I needed to know about my faith, but through conversations, stories, and questions, I was reminded how little I know and how important it is to continue learning and growing in Him.”*

This counselor’s story is just one of many transformational experiences that young adults have in camp ministry. But it doesn’t stop there. The relationships that are formed between summer staff and year-round staff allow for continued discipleship throughout the year. One of the joys of serving at camp is the opportunity to check in with students





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throughout the year. Camp leadership walks with students by meeting on campus and studying God's Word together, sitting around a campfire and sharing what God is doing in their lives, and offering support in person and through calls and texts. The summer starts an ongoing discipleship-focused relationship that seeks to encourage young adults as they venture on in life.

The beautiful thing about ministry is that we all play a role, regardless of the context we find ourselves in, especially when it comes to young adults. If you are looking for a step to take to encourage the college students around you in their faith journey, consider the ideas below:

### **Spend Time with Them**


So many things change throughout their college-age years, but you can be a constant in their lives. When they return home for the summer, the life they lived before college may feel different, or they might need to unpack all that happened during the school year. Give them a listening ear and an open heart to help them see all that God has in store for them.

### **Encourage Them to Apply for Camp**

There is not a single job I enjoyed more in college than the two summers I spent at camp. In addition to the hands-on ministry experience I received, the opportunities I had to challenge myself, and the things that God taught me in those summers, I was also able to build lifelong friendships that continued to encourage me in my faith throughout the rest of my young adulthood. Regardless of the field of study they are in, there is something for everyone to grow in at camp. Each year our summer staff is full of students working towards a variety of careers. From teachers to accountants, DCEs to design majors, any student can find a place at camp.

### **Get Involved with Your Local Camp**

At Camp Lone Star, we utilize local pastors and DCEs throughout the summer in various ways. They teach each morning to the whole camp, lead Bible study one night, and help facilitate worship, but one of the best ways they serve that week is by ministering to our summer staff. Many pastors and DCEs will go out of their way to be available to sit down with our young adult staff, listen to their needs, and pray for them as they minister to the



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campers in their care. Many of our staff will share memories of the time that the week's VIP (Very Inspirational Person) took time out of their schedule to connect with them and encourage them in their walk with Jesus. Reach out to your local camp and ask if they need any Bible study or devotional help during the summer. Ask if you can come lead worship for the summer staff or simply offer your time as a counselor or guide for those college students who might need some extra care.

### **Take Your Kids to Camp!**

There is one final consideration I would ask of you that would build up any college student as they follow Christ and seek out His will for their lives – take the kids and students in your ministry to camp. Whether it be summer camp, a weekend retreat, or a simple day trip to get outside, time at camp is invaluable. We read throughout Scripture that Jesus would often go into the wilderness or off to a quiet place to connect with His Father and camp ministries provide many of the same opportunities. Time away from busy routines and the chance to step into a new adventure is an excellent way to help students grow in their walk with Christ. Give them space and help them tune their hearts to Christ at a young age by giving them opportunities to slow down, listen, and respond to all that God is doing. Then, when they are young adults and seeking God's will for their lives, they will know His voice and be able to follow where He leads.

For more information about NLOMA camps near you, and how you can get involved, check out <https://nloma.org/>.



*Ross Owens lives in La Grange, Texas with his wife, Cait, and two kids, Zeke and Stella. After serving in student ministry in Houston for almost 10 years he made the jump in 2022 to camp ministry. He currently serves as the Director of Programs at Camp Lone Star. He is most excited about the opportunity to help disciple young adults who serve at camp throughout the year and would love to talk to you about how Lutheran Outdoors Ministry could help you meet the goals you have in ministry!*

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## Young Adults are People, Too!

Rebekah Freed


Young Adult Ministry has been a part of my life since before I even became a DCE. I served in peer ministry while in college as a Resident Assistant and Residence Hall Coordinator. My DCE internship job description included 45% young adult ministry which continued for eight more years in that congregation before taking my current position working at Concordia University, Nebraska. In addition to my work at Concordia, I also currently serve on the Ministry Leadership Council at the University Lutheran Chapel at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and was a Campus Ministry Assistant at the University at Buffalo in New York when I lived there.

Having experience serving on a university campus, in a congregational setting, and as part of congregations seeking to serve on public university campuses gives me a unique perspective on young adults and ministry for and with them. Below are a few things I've learned along the way. I pray they are helpful as you seek to serve the college students and young adults around you.

### **Young adults are Amazing. Young Adults are also... Well... Young Adults.**

My students blow me away almost every day. They are creative, passionate, fun, and insanely talented. I am constantly amazed at what they can do and the beautiful ways they care for each other and the community around them. Young adults are AMAZING.

They also are *young* adults. They're still figuring it out. They do ridiculous things that make me wonder what in the world they were thinking. (*Can you just eat your ice cream instead of randomly smearing it all over a vending machine?!*) They need us to come alongside them and help them learn, but don't underestimate these students. Instead, watch for the potential they have and help them live into that. If we show them consistently what the true, deep grace of Jesus looks like, especially when they "mess up big time," their lives will never be the same. In the anxiety and uncertainty of our current age, they need constant reminders that our God wins in the end, that He is dependable, and that He brings peace.



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**For congregational ministry, think assimilation.**

For many of us who are involved in children and youth ministries, our default is to add another age or life-stage-specific ministry for college students and/or young adults. This is especially true when we hear young adults desiring to connect and feeling like they don't belong after they graduate from youth group. While age or life-stage-specific opportunities are important and useful, I also found that a lot of my work in congregational young adult ministry was about assimilation. Normally, we think about this topic when it comes to new members integrating into the life of the congregation. However, for many of our young people, it is easy to graduate high school and suddenly feel like you don't belong. The most successful young adult ministries I've witnessed find a balance between events and programs specifically for this demographic and assimilation into the broader life of the congregation.

While in Buffalo, our congregation began having conversations about how to start that assimilation process long before graduation so that by the time a student becomes a young adult, they already feel part of the "adult" life of the congregation. For example, I noticed at one point how many of our young adults were hesitant to walk into an adult Bible class because it was so unknown to them. We started looking for or creating opportunities each year where our high schoolers would join in with the adults on Sunday morning to help lessen that barrier. We added more opportunities for kids and youth to serve in the church throughout their whole life as well. This also helped bridge that connection into young adulthood.

**Start with needs, not program ideas.**

The most successful initiatives I've been part of in young adult ministry have all started with the desire to meet a need, not create a program. They also involved ownership from young adults themselves. As I mentioned before, young adults are highly capable and skilled. Ownership comes when something matters. Programs constantly change; if college students are part of the young adult makeup you're interacting with, what "works" might change every semester. What worked in the fall may not work at all in the spring. However, if they feel ownership in the ministry and that ministry is based on meeting needs and not just "having something for the young adults," it will more naturally adapt and continue to be successful despite the rapid rate of change or turnover.



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## **The Local Church MATTERS!**

In every context I've served, I have seen this biblical truth prove true: young adults need the local church. They crave connection with other generations. They long for faith leaders and mentors. There is something historic and grounding about the practice of gathering with other believers that have been around since Jesus walked the earth. Young adulthood is a season to look back at our childhood and see what to take with us into the future; it's a season of uncovering identity and purpose. What better place to do that than in a community with other believers? For some who may have unfortunately grown up with bad interactions with Christians or the Church, a healthy vibrant local congregation that genuinely lives out the mission of Christ can change their whole life.

## **Little Things Have Big Rewards**


For some of you, perhaps the concept of "starting a young adult ministry" feels completely overwhelming. However, the little things make the biggest difference. When working near Buffalo, the change that I believe had the biggest overall shift in our ministry among young adults simply involved changing our attendance cards. Among all the various options a guest had to check on a guest card (such as 'desires a visit with a pastor' or 'youth ministry,' etc.), adding "Young Adult Ministry" did two key things. First, it communicated very early on that *young adults matter here*. It also helped us know who the young adults walking in the door were. Even if we didn't have any specific young adult ministry programming at the time, having a way for them to indicate their interest allowed me to follow up, see what they were interested in, and how best to get them connected to other young adults and the church as a whole. In my current university-based ministry, I see how students get excited when their church sends them a care package or even a simple card. Little things can have a huge impact.

## **Final Thoughts**

Early on in leading young adult ministry I came across this passage from 1 Thessalonians that remains a critical verse for me as I consider what young adult ministry is all about:

*Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. 1 Thessalonians 2:8*

My prayer today as you consider what young adult ministry looks like in your context — whether your whole job description centers around it or you're simply trying to figure out



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how to care for your own son or daughter who is in this life stage — is that you don't make it more complicated than necessary. Just like ministry with any age group, this verse reminds us that young adults grow in discipleship and belonging when they know they are loved and when we are delighted to share how the beautiful gospel of Jesus matters in our everyday lives. Center your efforts around this and I think you'll see it's worth it.



*Rebekah Freed is a Kansas-grown girl who now lives in the cornfields of Nebraska. After serving in congregational ministry near Buffalo, NY for nine years, she now works in the Student Life Office at Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska and helps with the Campus Ministry Team. Bekah loves finding ways to remind youth and young adults how much Jesus loves them. (Hint: it's a lot!) She enjoys kayaking, cozy blankets, peanut butter cup ice cream, the sound of little kids giggling, and celebrating the everyday blessings of life... often with confetti poppers!*



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## Tips and Tricks for Campus Ministries

Rev. Dr. Kent Pierce

Campus ministries serve an important role in the faith formation of college students who bear witness to Christ, now on campus, and one day in the various post-collegiate vocations to which they are called.

So, what are some “tips and tricks” for engaging in this important work?

While not an exhaustive list, here are some things to consider:


- Campus Ministry and the *Missio Dei*
- Develop a vision and a plan for your local context
- Train leaders who train leaders
- Adapt and be flexible

### **Campus Ministry and the *Missio Dei***

Soon after rising victoriously from the grave, Jesus appeared to His fear-stricken disciples in Jerusalem and bestowed on them a greeting of peace. This peace, however, wasn't meant only for the moment. The risen Christ brings a peace that is meant to go with the disciples as Jesus commissions them to continue His mission and resources them with the Holy Spirit. In John 20:20–23 we read:

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” (ESV)

Echoing the way in which the LORD God had breathed the breath of life into Adam at creation in Genesis 2:7, Jesus ushered in the new creation by breathing on His disciples, giving them the Holy Spirit and establishing the Office of the Keys (the power to retain and forgive sins). This is a foundational development in the establishment of what would



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become the Christian church and the missionary work of the members of the body of Christ.


We see the missionary work of the church begin to take shape in Acts 1:8 when Jesus addresses the original eleven apostles (just prior to Judas' replacement by Matthias) and says to them: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Starting in Jerusalem on Pentecost, the apostles begin their apostolic vocation of bearing witness to Christ by publicly preaching and teaching people about the salvation won for them through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Drawing upon a Biblical understanding of the *Missio Dei*, the example of Jesus and His first disciples, and the new life we receive in Baptism is foundational for developing contextual campus ministries that are centered in Jesus' disciple-making mission today.

### **Develop a Vision and a Plan for Your Local Context**

With a solid foundation in Christ's mission, campus ministry workers serve their ministries well when they gain a deep understanding of their local setting and prayerfully seek God's direction for reaching out to their campus community. Some insight into local context is easy to gain. Spending time on campus will reveal many of the important spaces, traditions, and resources of the university. In most cases, there is an official way that the university relates to campus ministry organizations, often through an association of recognized religious groups. Becoming a part of such a group and getting to know its members can be helpful. Student organizations, like LCMS U, are also a way for campus ministries to have a recognized presence on campus. Each university, of course, has its own requirements for these organizations, which means that they might not always be an option in every setting. At the very least, forming friendships with individual faculty and staff members can be a great way to begin an effective ministry on campus.

Another part of the context of a campus ministry is the core group of students who actively participate. Depending on the situation, this group might be quite large or very small. A variety of church backgrounds may be represented, as students come from different home congregations – or maybe from no home congregation at all. Regardless of its makeup, the student group is of central importance when it comes to developing a





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ministry vision and plan for your specific context. The students who are already active in campus ministry know their peers and university better than anyone and should be involved in the visioning and planning process.


### **Training Leaders who Train Leaders**

Student leaders and volunteers help facilitate just about everything that happens as a campus ministry engages in Christ's mission. Investing in these students is an essential role of the church worker who leads the campus ministry.

A combination of formal leadership training and informal mentoring often works best. Most student groups are organized around a governance structure with elected officers. Some campus ministries utilize peer ministers or small group leaders. In each case, formal leadership training is necessary. This can happen in a variety of ways, which might include leadership retreats, training classes, or workshops. While it's tempting to have the training focus on the programmatic elements of the leaders' roles, it's vital that this training is centered on the spiritual development of the leaders. Good spiritual leadership training will help student leaders better understand their baptismal identity and their spiritual gifts, and will help them explore specific ways that they might serve as members of the body of Christ.

Informal mentoring can take place throughout the school year as the campus worker comes alongside students as they serve. Being present and available for student leaders, serving as a sounding board, and offering guidance or help are important ways to help student leaders develop and grow. Being in the Word together, whether devotionally at meetings, in leadership Bible studies, or in one-on-one conversations, should always be an intentional component of mentoring.

The process of developing new student leaders is served well when current leaders are given an essential role in recruiting, training, and mentoring new students. Campus communities are transitional and fluid. The leadership team that was in place last year, or even last semester, won't be the team that is in place next year. When older students are actively coming alongside younger students in an intentional way, there will be new leaders in the pipeline. Developing a campus ministry that recognizes this reality as a



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strength, rather than a limitation, will help that ministry be effective in its mission on campus – and beyond.

### **Adapt and Be Flexible**

Campus ministries are sending ministries. Students and young adults who are present for a limited number of years are resourced and released to serve wherever God leads them in their next season of life. This has a multiplication effect, as each “sent” leader will help raise up other leaders who bear witness to Christ.

When it comes to “tips and tricks” for campus ministry, campus workers must always be ready to adapt and remain flexible. Even with a solid understanding of the local mission field and a well-thought-out ministry plan, the rate and nature of change in campus ministry requires a constant process of assessing and adapting. Beyond the natural cycle of graduations and a new incoming class, each semester disrupts the previous. Internships, practicums, dating relationships, housing changes, and a host of other factors alter how students participate and serve. Being able to anticipate these changes and understanding their nature will give the campus worker an opportunity to lead proactively.

While the ever-changing nature of campus ministry comes with some challenges, it is an exciting example of how God is at work in and through His people making disciples for life.



*Dr. Kent Pierce is the pastor of Campus Lutheran Church in Columbia, MO, serving the campuses of the University of Missouri, Columbia College, Stephens College, and Moberly Area Community College – Columbia. Pastor Pierce has served as a campus pastor since 1999.*

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## Quarterly Question

How do you reconnect with former youth when they are home from college during school breaks?

I find one or two dates that work for everyone throughout the summer and invite everyone out for lunch at any of the 'local favorite' spots. It's even more enticing to former youth if I offer to pay. My days of being a broke college student aren't that far behind me!

-Austin Angerman

I've done a youth group alumni night in between Christmas and New Year's because that's when most of the kids are home. They come over to the church, we play all their favorite youth group games, have snacks, and just enjoy spending time together.

-Anna Gemar

I host a college get-together luncheon. I invite all the former youth back and we host a catered meal. We also have games and pass out prizes (gift cards) that they can use when they go back to college or while they are home on break. We do three events in the summer to engage with them also.

-Andy Frerich



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## Coming in Our Next Issue:

In our next issue, we'll be considering the intersection of DCE ministry and the military. Do you serve in a military town? Have you served God's people as a military chaplain or DRE? Are you a DCE who has served in the military? Do you have unique ideas of how to minister to those actively serving in any branch of the military at home or abroad - or their families? If you have experience or insight you'd like to contribute to the Spring issue, please contact the editors with your proposal by March 15th at [nadceeditors@gmail.com](mailto:nadceeditors@gmail.com).

**Did you enjoy this issue?** Save the date: **February 21st at 2pm CST** and watch your email for the Zoom link to discuss this edition of the Quarterly!

## Notes from the NADCE Board

- *February 21, 2pm CST: Tent Meeting about Young Adult Ministry.*
- *Save the date for the next NADCE conference! January 31-February 2, 2024 in Houston, Texas.*
- *We pray for God's blessings to outgoing Concordia St. Paul DCE Director Heath Lewis and incoming DCE Director Shelly Schwalm.*
- *NADCE t-shirts are for sale by clicking [here](#).*
- *Have you read the NADCE Annual Report sent at the beginning of the year? Check your inbox to see all NADCE accomplished in 2022 and what's to come this year!*



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## NADCE Quarterly Editing Team

### Allie Parkhurst, Assistant Editor

Allie Parkhurst graduated from Concordia University Nebraska in 2015 and Concordia University Irvine in 2022 and currently serves as Director of Youth Ministry at Peace Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Working with 6th-12th grade students, Allie especially loves the raw honesty and unrestrained joy of her middle and high school students in Confirmation and youth group.

Allie spends her free time reading as many novels as possible, talking with friends across the country, and thrift shopping.



### Michaela Seeliger, Editor

Michaela Seeliger graduated from Concordia University Texas in 2016 and now serves as Director of Christian Education at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Wichita Falls, TX where she enjoys working in children, youth, and family ministries. She especially loves VBS, confirmation ministry, and helping equip parents to teach the faith at home.

Michaela enjoys spending time with her family and friends, reading, and gardening. Although Texas has been her home for many years now, Michaela will always consider herself an Oklahoma girl.

