ABSTRACT

THE ACADEMY FOR STUDENT MINISTRY:

A STUDY IN YOUTH MINISTRY EDUCATION

by

Myrle R. Grate

The purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate a nine-month nondegree training program for youth ministers in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. The Academy for Student Ministry (ASM) Team designed five weekend training modules. The program covered concepts that are important for youth ministry development, and each module built on the previous one. The participants' cognitive and affective levels were measured before and after the ASM.

Overall each participant's pre-Academy test score increased from their post-Academy test score. Individuals' greatest improvements were in their ability to describe and explain their personal call to ministry and in their ability to articulate the need for specialized youth ministry in the church.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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A STUDY IN YOUTH MINISTRY EDUCATION

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Myrle Raymond Grate

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

For the past 2 ½ decades, the United Methodist Church has been in a state of

numerical decline. Membership has declined 12.5 percent, and attendance has declined

2.8 percent. The Methodist population as a percentage of the total national population has

declined 31 percent. In addition, the number of clergy under the age of thirty-five has

declined 11.5 percent, and the average age of members in the church has risen to fifty-

seven ("Making Disciples" 6).

This numerical decline has occurred in a period when the national population has

been growing (U. S. Census Bureau). Church consultation firms, seminaries, churches,

and bishops have suggested many different reasons for this decline and have proposed

various ways to respond to it. In my judgment, youth ministry should be included among

the many responses to the decline.

I would like to point out two very important statistics. First, the number two

reason families join churches is to have access to active youth ministry programs

(Selleck). Second, at 32 million, the current generation of youth, ages twelve to nineteen,

is the largest in American history (Miller and Norton 13). The ability of the church to

reach youth with the gospel is crucial for its health.

Challenges of Youth Ministry

Ministering to young people poses its own set of challenges, particularly in

today's culture. The youth minister is supposed to provide spiritual guidance,

programming, Christian discipleship, and opportunities for Christian fellowship for youth

who have a variety of spiritual needs and levels of interest. Youth today are pulled in more directions than ever and have more options for alternate activities than any previous generation. School, sports teams, clubs, friends, family, Internet, text messages, music, e-mail, and entertainment anywhere at anytime vie for their attention and loyalty. All of these distractions are supported by a marketing industry that pays billions of dollars to get their attention ("Advertising").

In addition, youth ministers have at least three constituencies. Their first loyalty is to the adolescents of the church. They also must appeal to the teenagers' parents. If five to eleven year old children are unhappy with the children's ministry at their church, parents are unlikely to excuse their children from attending. If adults are dissatisfied with an aspect of adult ministry at their church, they do not consult their children before skipping; however, during the between time of adolescence, both the youth and their parents must be satisfied with the church's youth ministry. Both must be convinced that the ministry is worthwhile because both have considerable influence in the decision about attending. The relationship between youth ministers and parents is further complicated by the fact that by its nature youth ministry is extremely important to parents. Parents are typically very passionate about wanting the very best for their children. Nevertheless, the parents' understanding of "the very best" often differs from that of the youth minister (Baker 47).

Youth ministers also must work closely with their pastors. Like parents, pastors want the best for the students in their churches, but their understanding of what is best sometimes differs from that of the youth minister. Pastors must balance their desires and goals for the youth program with those of the youth pastors, the parents, and the rest of

the congregation. Attempting to balance so many individuals' expectations can be challenging.

The youth minister must balance the needs and desires of adolescents, parents, pastors, and other adults in the congregation. When this many people are passionate about anything, discord is a potential problem. The situation is further complicated by the fact that these groups rarely meet to discuss the specifics of what they expect from the youth ministry at their church.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that youth ministers are often the youngest and the newest ministers on a church staff and have received the least training. Search committees and pastors frequently hire a youth pastor who is young. The understandable logic is that a younger person will relate better to adolescents, and this understanding is often true. Younger ministers have fewer experiences from which to draw as they face challenges.

Because of relatively short tenures youth ministers are often new to their church staffs. The first two years of youth ministry are the most stressful (Fields, *Your First Two Years* 35). Consequently, many youth misters do not stay long enough at a given church to feel their stress levels decline. This high dropout rate among youth ministers negatively affects their performance abilities (Makin iii).

The typical scenario is that a young, relatively inexperienced youth minister who has recently joined the church staff must please a broad range of individuals who have varying expectations of and measures for success in a work week that runs well over forty-eight hours on average (Lawrence 33). Because of this scenario, youth ministers need to know where to go to receive training and support.

Training of Youth Ministers

Since about 1990, some seminaries and universities have begun to offer degree programs in youth ministry, and these programs are most welcome and very helpful. These upper level degrees provide the Church with dedicated youth ministers who are truly masters for their work. However, many youth ministers do not have access to these types of programs. A seminary degree or even undergraduate degrees require a great deal of commitment. Too many youth ministers do not have the financial resources; the ability to move to a campus setting, or the time it takes complete an upper level degree in youth ministry.

Nondegree training is a common choice for these youth ministers. Some popular nondegree programs are the National Youth Workers Convention, Pass it On, Youth '07, The Core, Perkins School of Youth Ministry, and hundreds of one-day training sessions offered by judicatory offices. Like the degree programs, these concentrated training opportunities are most welcome and very helpful. Nevertheless, because these programs are one to five-day sessions, teaching sessions are limited. Terms such as *overview*, *nuts and bolts*, and *beginning youth ministry* are common phrases found in their workshop titles. These programs are invaluable. Participants are rejuvenated for ministry. After attending these concentrated training events youth ministers come home with new ideas for programs, and ministry. Many of these shorter programs are also large enough that youth pastors can seek out specialized lectures that will help them cope with specific ministry scenarios.

In my judgment, a fuller program of training for youth ministers who are unable to pursue the degree programs will help fill gaps in the education of the youth pastor. A

program that allows students to bond with each other and create meaningful ministry connections would provide community for local youth ministers. Youth pastors would also benefit greatly from having intentional times to debrief about their learning experiences, not only to deepen their own understanding but also to share what they have learned with their own congregations.

Purpose

The youth ministry community lacks a substantive nondegree training opportunities for youth ministers. This lack of training leads to a lower quality of ministry for adolescents and contributes to low job satisfaction for youth ministers (Makin 241).

The purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate a nine-month nondegree training program for youth ministers in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Research Questions

Three research questions were identified for this ministry project.

1. What level of affective and cognitive competence do youth ministers have before they begin the training program?

2. What level of affective and cognitive competence do youth ministers have after they complete the training program?

3. What parts of the training program were the most effective?

Definition of Terms

In this study, the principal terms are as follows.

A y*outh minister* is a practicing Christian who is a full-time employee, a part-time employee, or a volunteer of a Protestant church who, under the guidance of his or her church, seeks to nurture adolescents in the Christian faith. The terms *youth minister*, y*outh pastor*, and *youth worker* are used interchangeably.

An *adolescent* is a person who is twelve to nineteen years old. The terms *adolescent*, *teenager*, and *youth* are used interchangeably.

The nine-month training program is the *Academy for Student Ministry*, *Academy*, or *ASM*.

Learning goals are the foundational youth ministry concepts taught during ASM. *Cognitive competence* refers to a participant's perceived abilities of their grasp of the areas taught in the learning goals.

Affective competence refers to a participant's actual ability to recall and articulate the principles taught in the learning goals.

Ministry Intervention

The Academy for Student Ministry consisted of five training modules. The ASM team felt that fewer than five modules would not give adequate time to cover the topics. The team also felt that more than five modules would hinder participants' ability to attend all of the weekends. These modules occurred approximately every other month beginning in September 2007 and continuing through May 2008. Participants enrolled for the program before September and were expected to attend all five modules. Individuals

were not allowed to join the program once it had begun. The number of participants was

nine.

Each module began on a Friday evening at 6:30 and ended on the following

Saturday at 3:00 p.m. A typical schedule was as follows:

Friday

6:30 p.m.	Supper
7:30 p.m.	Worship
8:30 p.m.	First Speaker
9:30 p.m.	Round Tables
10:00 p.m.	Free

Saturday

8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 a.m.	Morning Worship
9:00 a.m.	Second Speaker
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
12:30 p.m.	Second Speaker
3:00 p.m.	A Service of Commissioning and Dismissal

Each weekend module included intentional periods of worship, fellowship, classroom

lectures, and guided small group discussion. Participants completed assigned readings

prior to each weekend. The ASM Team sent letters to the youth ministers' supervising

pastors and the staff parish relations committees of the churches at which they served.

The pastors and the committees had to agree to support their youth ministers as they

completed the program. Participants also created a ministry support group that would not

only pray for them but would also meet with them between sessions to debrief about the previous weekend. Upon successful completion of the program, the team sent an announcement letter to the youth ministers' pastors, staff parish relations committees, and their district superintendents, inviting them to celebrate the participants' achievement.

The program covered concepts that are important for youth ministry training, and each module built on the previous one. The concepts were understanding personal gifts and strengths, developing a theology of youth ministry, having and sharing a vision, affective administration, and discipleship training.

A team of individuals who have extensive experience in youth ministry in local churches decided the focus of each module and the topic of each lecture. This ASM team included two elders in the United Methodist Church, one deacon in the United Methodist Church, a youth minister from a United Methodist church, the director of church relations for Birmingham-Southern College, and me, the conference youth coordinator for the North Alabama Conference.

Context

In principle, the ASM is open to youth ministers of all Protestant churches. In fact, it was advertised to youth ministers of the North Alabama Conference, and all the participants were from churches in the conference. Our conference has 836 churches; 427 of these are known to have youth in their membership.

Methodology

Participants

By responding to advertisements the participants self-selected their participation in ASM. Nine youth ministers enrolled in the ASM. Three of these were full-time youth

ministers, three were part-time youth ministers, and three were volunteer youth ministers. One was female and eight were men. The median age was between 21 and 30. All nine were Caucasian and had graduated from college. They had worked as youth ministers for as little as six months and as long as twenty years. None had ever attended a seminary or divinity school, and none had studied youth ministry in college. The size of the youth groups in the churches ranged from six to forty.

Instrumentation

This was a pre-post nonexperimental study in the descriptive mode that utilized a researcher-designed questionnaire. The tabulation of the questionnaires provided an indication of the participants' level of competency for the educational goals of the ASM. Participants completed questionnaires before they began the ASM and after they completed all five weekends.

Variables

The independent variable for this project was the ASM. The ASM consisted of five Friday night and Saturday training events. The ASM design team required participants to attend all five weekends. The design team formed each weekend around specific learning goals. The ASM team chose include the competencies necessary for an effective youth ministry program.

The dependent variables of this project were the participants' levels of competency concerning the learning goals. The participants' understanding of the learning goals varied depending on their age, years in full-time ministry, and educational experiences. A researcher-designed questionnaire evaluated the competencies of the participants before the ASM and upon completion of the ASM.

Data Collection

I administered the questionnaires before the ASM and at the conclusion of the program. The participants did not sign their questionnaires, but they put the last three digits of their Social Security numbers on them so that I was able to compare the changing levels of competency of each individual participant.

Generalizability

The ASM design team originally created as a training resource of youth ministers in the North Alabama Conference, I limited the promotion to Methodist churches in North Alabama. No one was ever turned away and I invited many non-United Methodist youth ministers by word of mouth. I limited the study to youth ministers in churches of the North Alabama Conference. Far fewer participants enrolled than I originally expected; this low sampling limits any implications made. Other United Methodist conferences or churches in the southeastern United States that replicated this program can generalize similar outcomes. The implications for non-United Methodists not in the Southeast would be limited.

<center>**Overview of the Study**</center>

Chapter 2 of this study establishes the biblical, educational, historical, and cultural context for the study. The research design is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 reports the research findings, and Chapter 5 provides a summary and interpretation of the research findings. It also offers suggestions for further inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

Youth ministers have few, if any, options beyond the large commitment required for degree training and the limited scope offered by annual training events. The problem is a lack of comprehensive nondegree training opportunities for youth ministers. This lack of training leads to a lower quality of ministry for adolescents, shorter tenures for youth ministers, lower levels of job satisfaction, and poorly equipped ministers. The purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate a nine-month nondegree training program for youth ministers in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church.

This chapter is divided into three primary sections. The first part contains a review of some biblical precedents and theological justifications for training youth ministers. The second part is an outline of the history of youth ministry in North America, the predominant structures for youth ministry in the past two decades, and the history of youth ministry in the North Alabama Conference. The third part contains a summary of the learning goals for ASM.

Biblical Precedents and Justifications

Persons who engage in all kinds of Christian ministries naturally look for biblical precedents and justifications for what they do; however, the state of adolescence arose only in the modern period. For almost two thousand years, under Roman law, women were able to marry at twelve and men were able to marry at fourteen. The laws were very similar only a thousand years later in England. As recently as two hundred years ago

under common law in the United States, the same basic rules applied: women could marry at twelve and men at fourteen. For almost three thousand years, the minimum legal age for marriage never changed. Around the same time that the age of puberty began to decrease the legal age for marriage increased. The United States and Europe passed laws raising the age at which men and women could marry. "Although they were adults and had been treated as adults for thousands of years, teenagers were redefined as children. this was the creation of adolescence" (Koteskey 28).

Concern for Children and Their Training

The Bible has precedents for the church exhibiting a concern for the welfare of all people, children as well as adults, precedents for training ministers of all kinds, and theological justifications for that training. From the beginning the Bible displays a concern for children and their welfare. In the creation story, the Lord commanded human beings to have children (Gen. 1:28). Eve said that with the Lord's help she was able to have children (Gen. 4:1), and Sarah felt deprived because did not have children (Gen 18:10-12). Having and raising children is one of God's primary expectations for the human race.

One of God's great promises to Abraham was that he would have many descendants (Gen. 12:1-3). The promise itself was that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars and as grains of sand. At its most basic God's great blessing was one of having children. If God considers them one of his greatest blessings then children must be of great value. Abraham learned from the story of his attempt to sacrifice Isaac that children are never to be offered as sacrifices (Gen. 22; Lev. 18:21). In Egypt the offering of the Passover sacrifice protected the oldest male children of the Israelites, and

thereafter children as well as parents celebrated the Passover together (Exod. 12). If

God's greatest blessing to Abraham was that of many descendants, then his greatest curse

to Pharaoh was the death of his child.

Children are also included in all other major Jewish festivals (Greenberg 17). Not

only are the expected to a part of the community's affairs but they are also expected to

take part in its religious celebrations.

The Bible also displays a concern for the training of children:

> But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the
> things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the
> days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's
> children. (Deut. 4:9, NRSV)

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the
> Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all
> your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your
> heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at
> home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.
> (Deut. 6:4-7)

At this time in history most nation's traditions and history are strictly oral. If the Israelites

wanted God's instructions or if they wanted a record of God's interaction with them to

survive, then passing the information to their children was imperative. In Genesis even

Abraham's blessings are presented as contingent upon him directing his children in the

way of the Lord. While one of God's greatest blessing was the gift of children, the

blessing would ultimately fail if the children were not taught the ways of the Lord. If this

education of the faith, if this passing on of God's promises somehow failed, then God's

promised blessings would also fail (Gen. 18:19).

Even later in the Old Testament, the author of Psalms echoes a commandment to

teach the children:

> We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming
> generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders
> that he has done. He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in
> Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children; that
> the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up
> and tell them to their children. (Ps. 74:4-6)

Solomon himself, the archetype of the wise ruler, held the education of his children as a top priority. In his book Roy B. Zuck gives thirty-one examples from the book of Proverbs; in this list Solomon gives specific command for his sons to hear his words of instruction (136-37). The book of Proverbs itself is considered a work of instruction and education (Garrett 57). The training of children was a theme also developed in the wisdom literature: "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray" (Prov. 22:6). "A wise young person is better than an old and foolish king" (Eccles. 4:13). The Old Testament highlights the importance of both young people and their religious training.

Other Old Testament passages state clearly that the education of Israelite children was not exclusively accomplished in the home. The historical books of the Old Testaments include examples of children being taught by tutors (2 Kings 10:1, 5; 1 Chron. 27:32). Hannah wept bitterly because she had no child. When God did grant her a son, Samuel, she apprenticed him to Eli, the priest (1 Sam. 1-3). In the book of Judges, Manoah begs God to let the man of God teach them how to raise their son. "Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said, O Lord, I pray, let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we are to do concerning the boy who will be born" (Jud. 13:8). Both Psalms and Proverbs mention the training of children by someone other than their parents (Ps. 119:99; Prov. 5:13). The synagogue itself served many roles in the Jewish community. Foremost among these was the education of the children

(Synagogue). Religious education of the study of the Torah and Law actually defined the synagogue and its schools (Shepherd 890).

Jesus exhibited a special concern for children. He insisted that his disciples allow children to approach him, and when the children did, he put his hands on them and blessed them (Matt. 19:13-15). Pointing to a child, he told the adults nearby that they must become like the child in order to enter the kingdom and that everyone who welcomed a child also welcomed Jesus (Matt. 18:1-5). On several occasions he healed children, and he used the lunch of a youth to feed five thousand people (Matt. 17:18; John 6:9). He employed the word *children* as a metaphor for his followers: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matt. 7:11). He taught his followers to address God as "our Father" when they prayed (Matt. 6:9). If God is our father then Christians are God's children. If Christians want to follow Jesus' example of love then they are admonished to love, pray for, accept, be with, and bless the children (Zuck 202). The Bible tells about Jesus' childhood development. The author of the gospel of Luke thought childhood maturity was important enough to mention as it related specifically to Christ. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).

The early Church continued to display a concern for the well-being of children. Children were welcomed into the new community, the Church (Acts 16:15). In Ephesians children are instructed to obey their parents, and parents are instructed to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:1-3). In both the Old and New Testaments, children were considered a blessing from God. They were to be nurtured and

educated. Protestant ancestors John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley all also

believed that the education of children was crucial not only for faith development but also

for the continuation of the Church universal (Felton 96).   Wesley considered the

family, including children, a small church (Outler 309). Early Methodists even went so

far in their esteem for the education of children that members were routinely disciplined

for "not holding family" prayer (Wigger 90). The education and nurture of children are

historically and biblically significant.

The Training of Ministers

In the Old Testament era, the two principal kinds of ministers in Israel were

priests and prophets. The priest officiated religious services and ceremonies, cared for the

temple, was considered an expert in the Law, and acted as a mediator between the people

and God (Greenberg 892). The prophet was a special preacher understood to be anointed

by God, sometimes for a special purpose or season (Napier 918). The story of Samuel is

the call and apprenticeship of a prophet who performed priestly duties such as offering

sacrifice and anointing a king. The prophet Elijah served as a mentor—with some

reluctance—for Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).

In the New Testament era, the precedent for ministerial education is Jesus'

training of the twelve. He was a rabbi, and they were his disciples. He was their mentor,

and they were his apprentices, learning both his way of life and his way of service:

> You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their
> rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is
> not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must
> be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave
> of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give
> his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:42-45)

Paul served as a mentor and trainer for Timothy, whom he called his "loyal child in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2). Timothy was a pastor in Ephesus, and Paul told him not to feel insecure about his youth but to use the spiritual gifts God had given him in ministry (1 Tim. 4:11-16).

The people of God whose story is told in the Bible are very different from the people of God today, but the similarities are also striking. Then, as now, the people of God had an appreciation for children and a concern for their welfare and religious training. From biblical times until the present, persons whom God called to ministry received training for their ministry.

Another motivation for attempting to add to the training resources available to youth ministers is to improve the quality of ministry that youth ministers are able to provide. If the religious education of children is important, then the education children receive must be substantive and of high quality. Unfortunately, recent studies show that Protestant denominations as a whole do a poor job of instilling their values and doctrine into their children. In the largest study of its kind, researchers found that children are not able to articulate the essence of their faith or the most basic tenants of their doctrine:

> The reality is that even those who are doing better are only doing relatively better. The study concludes that our distinct impression is that very many religious congregations and communities of faith in the United States are failing rather badly in religiously engaging and educating youth. (C. Smith 262)

This failing is a sobering truth. One of the issues Christian Smith points out is that students cannot articulate what they believe. One of the primary reasons they cannot articulate their faith well is that most adults cannot do it either. One important factor the study identifies is that students do not understand the central doctrines of historically orthodox Christianity. This lack of understanding does not mean they misunderstand

them; it means they do not know these central doctrines at all. Poorly educated and poorly trained youth pastors will only worsen this unfortunate trend.

Not only are many adolescents unaware of the core doctrines of their faiths, but also they have unconsciously replaced it with a more modern and consumer-oriented religion, called m*oralistic therapeutic deism* (C. Smith 171). Many individuals, young and old, unwittingly ascribe to a distant god that ultimately wants them to be happy. This god acts as a "divine counselor and cosmic butler" (172). The god is always there to listen and give vague advice about being good and keeping the faith. The god is also there to fulfill needs and ultimately take care of problems (175). A simplistic ethical standard combined with a god that really just wants people to be happy has created generations of churchgoers who are, in reality, only marginally Christian. This fallacy does not represent the example of living in the imitation of Christ. As disciples and followers of Christ the imitation of Christ, not "happiness", is our ultimate goal. Slogans such as *What Would Jesus Do*, or *Fully Relying on God* are all too common in a culture that needs instead a sound theological foundation. While these models are not bad in and of themselves, they become destructive when they are used as the theological basis for ministry (Dean 46). Reducing Christianity to a moralistic set of values or sociological premises removes all its potential passion. Adolescents want more than a rulebook to follow; they want to love and be loved. A myopic ethical model fails to produce or reflect God's love. Only when we take our students beyond elementary discipleship into an intimate relationship with Christ that they will truly begin to experience God's love. By making youth pastors aware of these pitfalls in a setting that reaches a broader spectrum of the population we can begin to arrest this deterioration.

At the heart of the problem are teaching and training youth pastors to become more than ministry directors. "The future of the church does not depend on youth but only on Jesus Christ" (Dean 26). Dean points to a fundamental problem within not only youth ministry but also ministry in general. Churches are frequently more concerned about the presence of young people as a symbol of ecclesial longevity rather than the presence of Jesus Christ. This lack of focus is usually passed on to youth pastors. Their success depends on "getting youth in the doors" not on introducing youth to Jesus Christ. Whether they are in an interview with the staff parish relations committee (SPRC) or developing core values for their ministry team, youth pastors must have their ministry goals clearly set on Jesus, not on students. Too often I have seen the excuse for game night because of the traditional United Methodist Youth Fellowship, where fellowship is synonymous with "wholesome activity." Fellowship cannot be an excuse for entertainment and shallow relationships. Youth ministry must provide genuine community that engages youth with God's love, the love of the church, and asks that same love in return.

History of Youth Ministry

When compared to the rest of the church, the history of youth ministry is relatively short.

The Arrival of Adolescence

Children and youth's role in modern society is significantly different from what it has been for the past two thousand years. In the past children and youth were economic provisions necessary for the survival of the family. The one occasion upon which Jewish and Christian communities devoted special attention to children was their transition from

childhood to adulthood, which was celebrated by the rites of passage known as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and baptism/confirmation (Dean and Yost 1).

As recently as four hundred years ago, because of the absence of adolescence, childhood was short. The Puritans brought Calvinism's untiring work ethic to the colonies and apprenticed children to the tasks of adulthood Zinn 77).

By the late nineteenth century, industrialization gave rise to a new class of people in society by displacing young persons from the work force. At the same time, immigration patterns rapidly increased America's religious diversity. A shift toward child-centered family and educational values led to new understandings of youth. As the industrial revolution gathered steam and improved, health care decreased death rates, families needed fewer children to survive, and a unique kind of American family emerged, a family in which adolescence was recognized as a distinct stage of life. Individuals went from being children to being adults with no interim preparation for adulthood. By the turn of the century, psychologists, educators, parents, workers, and urban reformers began to speak about what the historian Joseph Kett calls "the era of the adolescent" (11-13).

Ministry to Adolescents

In the midst of this rapidly changing society, the church was the first to initiate activities intentionally designed to involve youth. In an evangelistic effort, the church began reaching out to these adolescents by teaching them to read. This evangelistic effort was the first time the church attempted to evangelize or minister to teenagers as a specific subculture.

Charles Web Courtoy suggests that mainline Protestant churches have moved through three distinct eras in youth education and work—the society era, the fellowship era, and the youth ministry era (45). The *society era* had its beginnings in 1831 as the First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia founded the Juvenile Missionary Society, an idea that quickly spread to churches in New York and surrounding areas. Within five years, the Women's Christian Temperance Union recruited Cold Water Armies to provide wholesome forms of recreation for teenagers, with the goal of rescuing them from the corruption of alcohol. The Cold Water Armies did more than provide a social outlet for youth. They organized youth choirs, developed social activities, and engaged in service projects to aid the poor and needy (Dean and Yost 2).

The most identifiable first effort to offer biblical training, fellowship connections, and evangelistic opportunities for youth was begun by Dr. Francis Clark. Dr. Clark's vision was to empower young people to become active members of their congregations rather than objects of ministry. To this end he began the Christian Endeavor Society in 1881. The Christian Endeavor Society transformed youth ministry and met with great success. Within ten years, auxiliary organizations known as *leagues* or *societies* blossomed everywhere. Before the beginning of the twentieth century, national conventions for youth and young adults became increasingly popular. Christian Endeavor, for instance, brought 55,000 youth to Boston for a convention in 1895; the Methodist's Epworth League gathered 25,000 for a convention in 1897 in Toronto (Strommen 2). This unprecedented attractiveness of youth auxiliaries showed itself in a proliferation of groups that were used to promote a variety of causes, including missions,

personal holiness, and music. In turn, Teacher Training Institutes prepared lay adults to serve as counselors for these youth auxiliaries.

Shortcomings in the society era became apparent, however, during the 1920s and 1930s. The Great Depression of the 1930s hit at a time when religious concerns and beliefs were waning in the minds of American adolescents. Dissatisfaction with the auxiliary form of youth work grew. Church workers wanted another form of youth work that could function inside the structure of the church rather than as a separate society.

A second era of youth work began in the 1930s when a *fellowship era* was launched. Auxiliary societies were replaced by Sunday evening fellowships. These youth fellowships came under the organizational control of local congregations. All youth activities, including Scouts, athletic programs, and choirs, began to be coordinated and supervised by congregational committees on education. Youth fellowships typically divided their work into five areas: Christian faith, Christian witness, Christian outreach, Christian citizenship, and Christian fellowship. This transfer of youth work into the educational program of the church occurred for staffs of thirty-nine major denominations (Dean and Yost 5). Within a short period, youth auxiliaries were renamed with titles such as Methodist Youth Fellowship, Pilgrim Fellowship, Westminster Fellowship, and Reformed Church Fellowship. With this change, the purpose of youth work shifted from that of nurturing the personal faith of youth to one of training youth in how to function as proper church members. Like the first era, this period had its assets. During its twenty-five years, 1935-1960, leadership schools, caravans, Bible camps, and conventions were promoted extensively with denominational support by large denominational churches.

Though effective, this second form of youth work began to show signs of

difficulty and reduced demand. By 1960 the Sunday evening fellowship, criticized for its

overly protective stance, was accused of being irrelevant to the pressing needs of the day.

Fellowship meetings were seen as isolating young people from the real issues of the day.

Strommen notes that even in the heyday of denominational youth departments during the

1950s and 1960s, many local churches modeled their youth ministry on the club model,

not only because this model seemed attractive, but also because adequate training and

support for other models were not available (Jones, Rahn, Strommen). Many of the

professional youth leaders called for a new form of youth ministry (Trimmer, Speech).

The transition to *youth ministry*—a third era in youth work—began in 1960. Its

emphasis was very different from the two earlier periods in youth work. If the first era

stressed an individual's personal Christian life and the second era focused on

churchmanship, then the third era would be characterized by greater attention to social

action and justice.

The primary criticism of youth ministry in the 1960s and 1970s centers on the

notable lack of a clear sense of purpose and approach. All that was common among youth

ministries in different denominations were particular assumptions that became associated

with this third era of youth work. In stressing youth as full laity, programs for youth

encouraged national youth organizations to disband. In stressing a youth ministry based

upon local needs, the programs discouraged denominational staffs from preparing

programs for congregational use. In stressing person-centered ministries, the programs

encouraged the dropping of the program approach to Sunday evening fellowship. In

stressing an ecumenical youth ministry that is sensitive to human need and injustice, the

programs asked youth to become involved in social issues to the exclusion of the practice

of other spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, and even personal commitment to Christ.

During this third era, many Protestant denominations disbanded their national organizations, ceased publishing manuals and program resources, and left congregations on their own to tailor youth ministries to fit their local needs (Trimmer). A further weakness during this era was that youth ministry received limited support from pastors, adults, and youth themselves. In contrast to the two previous eras, the professional youth leaders primarily carried out youth work.

Another way to view the inception of ministry to adolescents is through what Mark Senter calls "youth movements" (50). In his book he argues that youth ministry in America has gone through fifty-year cycles of ten years of innovation and twenty years of stagnation followed by twenty years of decline. According to Senter the most important result of each revolution was renewed success in evangelism among adolescents. Senter first noticed patterns in the areas of economics, sociology, and the Bible. After comparing this fifty-year pattern to youth ministry, he identified three cycles beginning with the YMCA and Sunday School in the nineteenth century, continuing with the Christian Endeavor movement of the 1880s and ending with the parachurch youth organizations of the 1950s such as Youth for Christ and Young Life. Each cycle also followed a predictable pattern. Charismatic and entrepreneurial leaders began innovative ministries that differed substantially from anything going on in local churches. Once these movements achieved some measure of success and a more formal structure, denominations and local churches imitated the new methods while often eliminating or watering down some of the key substance of the model. The movements were then

slowly smothered under the weight of a bureaucratic system (148).

The last chapter of Senter's book he lists ten future trends for youth ministry. Of the ten, two deal with training and equipping the youth ministers and laity to do the work of youth ministry (180-85). In order for youth ministry to thrive in the next cycle, the youth minister must be able to equip others to do the ministry. Senter states that seminaries, national conferences, and training centers will not be able to keep up with this demand. ASM is positioned to train lay youth ministers whether they are full-time or part-time. I believe the preparation provided by ASM will go a long way as it trains youth ministers to equip others in doing youth ministry.

Recent United Methodist Ministry to Adolescents

Beginning in the late 1960s, the United Methodist Church, like many other denominations, decreased funding for developing youth ministry resources and eliminated staff positions on both the national and jurisdictional levels (Trimmer, Speech). This decreased support was so drastic that Dr. Ed Trimmer referred to this time period as "this desertion of youth ministry by now the United Methodist Church" ("Youth Ministry").

Two primary issues contributed to this decreased support. First, the National Council of Churches presented a new understanding of youth ministry. The council stressed the understanding that youth were church members in full connection and, as such, should be integrated into the wider body (Geneva Church 27). As a result the United Methodist Church saw little need for specialized ministry departments, national staff, and youth ministry curriculum. Second, in 1968 the United Methodist Church was preoccupied with the creation of a new ecclesial structure as the United Brethren and the

Methodist Church merged (*Book of Discipline* 9), and judicatory structures dedicated any unused resources to figuring out what the new church would look like.

The void created by the lack of denominational youth ministry support was filled primarily in one of two ways. One was through a resurgence of independent evangelical youth organizations such as Youth for Christ, Young Life, and Campus Crusade. These organizations focused their resources on the unambiguous purpose of bringing youth to a committed faith in Jesus Christ (Trimmer, "Youth Ministry" 8).

For many churches the independent evangelical youth organization became the evangelistic arm of their congregations. For instance, Young Life established a "church partnership model" whereby a church employs a Young Life staff person to do the youth ministry of the local church at the same time he or she was leading a Young Life ministry through a local high school club (Fletcher 6). Young Life would find and train the person for the church, and the church agreed to pay the salary of the Young Life youth worker.

In addition to parachurch ministries to youth, some parachurch ministries were created to train youth ministers. Youth Specialties and *Group* magazine were launched in 1969 and 1974 respectively, and they addressed the need for youth ministry curriculum and resources ("Youth Specialties 30th Anniversary"; "Our Story"). Each supplied local churches with edgy, nondenominational curriculum, programs, and advice for ministering to the current generation of adolescents. Currently these organizations are the major producers of resources for youth groups in the country. They have moved from generating materials for adult youth workers to giving large conventions for them and to producing youth events and publishing books and youth ministry periodicals. *Group*

magazine, for example, reaches about three thousand to four thousand United Methodist churches (Gilliland 1).

North Alabama Conference Ministry to Adolescents

The North Alabama Conference (NAC) has a long and meaningful history of youth ministry, and this fact makes ASM, and consequently this study, possible. The NAC has had a full-time coordinator of youth ministries for six decades. When other judicatory offices were cutting their denominational funding for youth ministry, the NAC hired a full-time youth minister. With a renewed emphasis on youth minister training, the NAC began the Academy for Student Ministry in September 2005.

The NAC youth ministry program began in 1947. A young Presbyterian named Nina Reeves had just finished her master's degree in physical education and recreation at the University of Alabama. She was familiar with the conference's work. She frequently led recreation and games at their Epworth Training Institutes. The Reverend V. H. Hawkins asked Nina to create a conference youth ministry program. She turned him down two times before finally agreeing to take the position even though she "didn't know what being the youth director of a conference even meant" (Reeves 1). The very next week she found herself at the conference's youth assembly. At this point she thought she really might like being the conference youth minister and she felt God nudging her in another direction.

Three years later the NAC, with the help of David Hutto and Reeves, purchased, and dedicated a few hundred acres of land near Oneonta, Alabama. This land would soon become the most sacred place for conference youth ministry for the next five decades, Camp Sumatanga. At the dedication service for the camp, Bishop Marvin Franklin talked

about his trips to the Himalayas. Climbers in the Himalayas could find rest for their journey at what the local population called sumatangas. Sumatanga means place of rest and vision. At the next annual conference the youth council proposed Camp Sumatanga as the name for the conference camp. In the summer of 1950, the conference had its first camp. Camp Sumatanga was to become the center of conference youth ministry for the next fifty years.

The program in North Alabama defined itself early as a ministry that would rally around issues of social justice. When Reeves and the students learned that the churches of the Central Alabama Conference, the black Methodist churches, and the churches of the North Alabama Conference, the white churches, did not mix, they began a ministry focus that would eventually lead to the merging of these two conferences.

In 1949 during a time of racial tension in the South, the students of the two conferences began to meet together for worship, fellowship, fun, and food. A few years latter in 1954, Reeves invited Julius Scott a black pastor from Boston to be their youth camp speaker. Because Julius was black, they decided to have a committee from the youth council meet with the executive committee of the Board of Christian Education to get their permission. After much debate, the committee said he could come if he stayed in the Health Lodge (not with the youth) and ate in the dining hall at a separate table designated for him. To Reeves' surprise he agreed to come anyway. Before the second day of the camp had ended, the students had taken over Julius' table and he had no choice but to sit with them for meals.

However, the Sumatanga Board of Trustees heard he had come to camp. Many were upset that they had a black meeting with the youth, so all the black cooks at Camp

were fired, and the Trustees voted that no blacks would be allowed at Camp Sumatanga.

This rule held for almost a decade until Bishop Kenneth Goodson forced the issue again

by personally inviting a black preacher to speak at the Bishop's Convocation held at

Camp Sumatanga. The camp opened to all.

Nevertheless, the two conferences were still separate. The Central Alabama

Conference had voted to merge in 1970, but in 1971 the vote to merge in the North

Alabama Conference was voted down. After this failed vote the youth council began

working for merger, hoping it would pass in 1972. At that time, June Morgan Mack, now

a professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, was president of the conference

youth. She and the youth council wanted the merger to pass. Mack later said of the

merger:

> I have vivid memories of the merger debate. There was no question that individually and collectively the youth of the conference were in favor of this merger. We saw no reason to be against it—it was simply right—and we could not fathom the basis of the controversy. When we went to conference that historic year, we were prepared by our youth leaders to expect challenges. However, we were not prepared for the lack of respect some of the delegates showed us. We were so accustomed at camp and in our churches to being leaders—that meant being listened to and taken seriously. Clearly many delegates thought of us as children who had been brainwashed. This chilling reception prompted us to write a position paper on the subject of merger. Each youth delegate wrote a few paragraphs about his/her feelings regarding the issue. We placed ourselves inside the double doors, directly in the path of every delegate who attended the conference. We greeted each one with a smile and handed out the paper. Some took it, others dismissed it and us. Merger passed and we were ecstatic, fully aware of the historical significance of the event. (Reeves 4)

Camps in the 60's and 70's had as many as 250 students filling every bed in a section of

camp called the Pool Camp. The conference began to have more and more programs at

Camp Sumatanga, not only in the summer but also for weekend retreats for the churches

in the conference. Retreats that were established at this time lasted until the early part of

the twenty-first century: recreation workshop, spiritual life advance, church related vocations conference, Christian lifestyles weekend, the United Nations and Washington, DC seminar, social justice weekend, folk festival, and various mission trips.

The 60s and 70s was a time in the history of youth ministry when different conferences hosted large youth rallies. Once a year, the youth from the churches in the conference would come together for such a rally. One of the largest rallies was in 1968, when Bishop Kenneth Goodson was the main speaker. They met in the Boutwell Auditorium in Birmingham. The crowd was estimated to be over four thousand.

One of the great strengths of the conference youth program was in the methodology by which the Conference Youth Council or Council on Youth Ministry (COYM) was structured. Students were elected and appointed from a Sumatanga Leadership Camp in the summer; around seventy interested youth comprised the Council. The Council had five standing committees plus special areas of interest; each committee was given a specific purpose and empowered by the youth coordinator to fulfill the purpose. The committees were given adult advisors. Several advisors were second, and sometimes even third, generation participants who came up through the youth program and were extremely dedicated to the work of the COYM. The council formally met three times a year. Each year the council published a calendar of its events. These events were the output of the five committees and the *special interest* committee(s). The council instigated many means to raise money to fund or supplement funding for various projects. One such fundraiser produced the Sumatanga songbooks that were used at camp for many decades. Participating in the COYM was an experience individuals carried for a lifetime.

One of the reasons the program was so successful was because it truly empowered youth to be about the business of doing ministry. The program trained youth to be the leaders of churches. The youth officers ran the camps and the weekend retreats. They presided at the meetings, participated in the evening programs, spoke at vesper services, and wrote the morning devotions. The older youth on the summer leadership team led the prayer groups in the cabins at night and counseled with many younger campers (Reeves).

Reeves, the visionary youth leader who began this program, remained in the conference youth ministry position for forty-nine years. A second youth coordinator, Danny Jones, was selected by Reeves to take the position upon her retirement in 1996. Under its second coordinator, the program remained largely unchanged for seven more years. It was not uncommon to see Reeves at COYM planning meetings even after her retirement. The program has a strong history.

By this time many once vibrant programs had lost some of their original luster. Frequently events had just enough students to be considered viable. Interestingly the conference program followed a pattern similar to the one described by Senter. A charismatic and entrepreneurial leader began the innovative COYM ministry that differed substantially from anything going on in the local churches. Once the movement achieved some measure of success and a more formal structure, local churches imitated the new methods while often eliminating or watering down some of the key substance of the model. The movement was then slowly smothered under the weight of a bureaucratic system. The council had unwittingly become a closed circle to which most churches felt little connection. The second and third generation leaders whose lives were changed by this dynamic program tried to recreate their experiences for the current generations.

When I took over the program in 2003, it had become a self-professed congregation within the North Alabama Conference. The goal of the program had become to create a place for students who did not fit in at the local church level with which to have a community to worship and fellowship. The program was designed to *catch the children that fell through the cracks of the local church*. While providing a place for these students is a worthy goal, I did not feel it should be the goal of the conference youth program. I shifted the focus from catching the students that fell through the cracks in the local church to one that sought to fill the cracks so no more students would fall through. The conference consolidated the numerous yearly retreats offered into one weekend for middles school students, one weekend for senior high students, and one weekend for both. In addition to these retreats, the conference always offered a summer mission opportunity that alternated each year between domestic and foreign locations.

I used the extra resources gained by offering fewer events to increase the amount of support the conference offered directly to the local youth minister. Besides one-day seminars, NAC gatherings at national training events, and frequent on-sight consultations, I began the ASM. The ASM is an important tool for the conference youth programs as it challenges and equips a new generation of youth ministers.

Principles of Youth Ministry

People who have engaged in youth ministry and who have observed youth ministry across the years speak about principles that undergird ministry to youth. For example, Richard R. Dunn, who has taught youth ministry at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, proposes that youth ministers must master four major areas of competency. They are personal efficacy, interpersonal effectiveness, ministry track proficiency, and

integrative learning aptitude. Dunn describes personal efficacy as an individual's ability to demonstrate an appropriate level of Christian maturity expressed through personal faith, sense of self, and the ability to take responsibility for one's own growth and development. Personal efficacy includes but is not limited to matters of time management, talents, spiritual gifts, ministry calling, and nurturing oneself. Interpersonal effectiveness is a person's ability to create and maintain meaningful ministry relationships. Initiating relationships, maintaining relationships, nurturing relationships, building covenantal relationships, and growing through interpersonal conflict are all aspects of an individual's *interpersonal effectiveness. Ministry task proficiency* is unique in Dunn's list because it is dependent upon a person's mastery of the previous competencies. Personal and interpersonal competencies serve as the delivery vehicles for task proficiencies. Dunn divides *ministry task proficiency* into five categories: leadership, organization/management, communication, contextualization, and discipline. Finally, Dunn describes *integrative learning aptitude* as one's willingness to remain a lifelong student of youth ministry practice. Ministers must also be willing to put into practice through active ministry the concepts they are learning (25-36).

Paul Borthwick, a professor at Gordon College in Massachusetts, suggests that youth ministers need *self-acceptance*, *flexibility*, *personal growth*, *thoughtfulness*, *integrity*, *priorities*, and *endurance* to which he adds specialized skills in *communication*, *administration*, *counseling*, and *teamwork* (99-109). *Self-acceptance* is a minister's ability to accept his or her own self, but it also implies a knowledge of one's own strengths and weaknesses. Borthwick describes *flexibility* as the ability to adapt and change to dynamic needs of youth culture. *Thoughtfulness* is the intentional planning and

theological development that goes into a holistic approach to ministry. It is taking the

time to consider the why of youth ministry. A youth minister with *integrity* is one who

models with his or her own life the Christian standard of morality set forth in the Bible.

Borthwick describes maintaining *priorities* as the ability of a youth minister to keep his

or her personal priorities such as a personal relationship with God and relationships with

family in focus as he or she simultaneously pours himself or herself into the students to

whom he or she ministers. The final quality Borthwick mentions is the ability of a youth

worker to remain steadfast and committed to a life of influencing youth.

To this list of qualities, Borthwick adds specialized skills. Like Dunn, Borthwick

qualifies the necessity of these skills with the presence of his list of qualities.

Communication skill describes a youth worker who can communicate effectively both

orally and in writing with students, parents, volunteers, and the larger church.

Administration refers to the ability to create a yearly calendar, manage money, manage

personal time, raise funds, and coordinate multiple programs. C*ounseling* is more than

sitting face-to-face with students or parents dispensing advice or moderating conflict. For

the youth pastor, *counseling* implies a complete mentoring process that not only counsels

but also teaches and models through healthy Christian relationships. *Teamwork*,

Borthwick's final skill, is the ability of a youth minister to work on a team such as a

church staff. When creating teams by delegating responsibilities and working with teams,

the youth minister must remember to act as the visionary leader for the volunteers.

Steve Gerali, who teaches at Azusa Pacific University in California, made a

presentation to an association of youth ministry educators in 1999 in which he proposed

three areas of understanding and six competencies for youth ministers. The three areas

are theological and biblical literacy, historical and philosophical foundations, and the application of psychological and sociological theory. The six competencies are communication and teaching skills, administrative and organizational skills, programming skills, counseling skills, leadership development skills, and research skills.

Duffy Robbins, a prolific writer, speaker, and youth ministry professor at Eastern University at St. David's, Pennsylvania, divides the youth minister's competencies in this way: personal skills, people skills, administration, leadership, and biblical, theological, pastor skill (560). For Robbins these broad categories encompass everything from working effectively with student discipleship and designing worship to time management and creating a budget.

Richard Ross, a Southern Baptist, identifies six general abilities that youth ministers need: a growing relationship with Christ, a worthwhile example, ability to relate to youth, ability to lead and equip adults, ability to relate to parents of youth, and ability to relate well to other staff (24-28). Lists such as these are common in tables of contents for youth ministry texts (e.g., Dettoni 2; Fields, *Purpose-Driven* 16; T. Smith 3; Bertolini 2).

More recently Andrew S. Jack and Barrett W. McRay surveyed seventy-five Christian colleges and universities known to have youth ministry education programs (57). Of those representatives thirty-eight returned surveys. Jack and McRay sought to define the knowledge and skills a youth minister should possess upon graduating from a degreed program. Among other things Jack and McRay asked these teachers, "What, in your judgment, is a well-trained graduate emerging from the youth ministry program at your school?" (57). This survey question had three subcategories concerning the specific

knowledge, qualities, and skills a youth ministry graduate should posses (See Table 1).

Table 1. The Qualities of a Well-Trained Youth Minister

What, in your judgment, is a well-trained graduate emerging from the youth ministry program at your school?		
What knowledge will the graduate possess?	What qualities of character will be true of them?	What ministry skills will they have acquired?
Bible and Theology	Integrity	Biblical Interpretation
Psychology	Calling	Teaching
Sociology	Leadership	Administration
Ministry	Love People/Relational	Interpersonal Skills
Educational Theory	Love and Obey God	Cultural Awareness
Self		Leadership/Vision
		Ministry

(Jack and McRay, 59)

According to their research, a youth ministry graduate should have a solid grasp

of biblical and theological concepts as they relate to and support youth ministry. The

youth ministry should be aware of current trends and cultural shifts in the study of

adolescent development, psychology, and culture. They would need a strong grasp of the

historical models of youth ministry and how those models influence current thought.

Youth ministers should also have a solid grasp on models of Christian education and

theory. Finally, the ministers must have a clear sense of calling into ministry and the gifts

to impart and model a Christ-centered transformed life. By the end of their research Jack

and Ray did have suggestions for topics they felt were notably missing (66-71). They

were encourage by the advances that academic youth ministry has made, and encouraged the community to continue further study into what an ideal youth minister might look like.

Overview

The literature shows a variety of *foundational competencies* for youth ministry. The ASM team thought that the competencies fell into one of three categories. First, many of the competencies were skills based and help was already being offered in one-day training sessions or from youth ministry Web sites. Sessions such as leading group games, or Sunday night programming ideas are helpful. However, we felt we need to offer a broader foundation for the ASM. Second, some of the competencies required extensive background training or the ability to teach them effectively beyond the scope of this study. Areas such as *self-acceptance*, *counseling*, *historical foundations*, and *sociological theory* were deemed too in-depth in focus for this program. A two to four hour lecture would not give these areas enough information to begin to be helpful. These competencies might be better pursued through an academic institution. The third and final group of competencies were those the committee knew to be foundational. Yet they were not so extensive that they could not be learned or taught effectively in a training program of only five weekend events. This third group of competencies became the *learning goals* for each individual weekend.

The design team combined this third category of competencies with their own personal knowledge and experience to determine the *learning goals*. Helping the ASM students to understand themselves was the main focus of the first learning goal. The team thought it would be appropriate to begin the ASM with sessions that allowed participants

to reflect upon their personal call to ministry. On more than one occasion this reflection

has meant that a participant came to the realization that they truly were not called into

youth ministry. As they sought to clarify their personal call they were also given the tools

to help them realize what gifts they brought to their ministry area. The ASM team also

thought that a theology of youth ministry was essential for any youth pastor. Because this

topic can be extensive, the design team devoted an entire weekend to the subject. The

Friday evening session, as well as both Saturday sessions were dedicated to gaining a

firm grasp on why we as followers of Christ think youth ministry is so important. From

theology we moved into the ability to synthesize beliefs with ministry's culture and then

be able to express it to others; in short be able to share one's personal vision. The ability

to put understanding of and theology into a framework that can be clearly communicate

and taught to others is essential for successful ministry. The fourth learning goal,

administration, could in some cases be classified as skills based. The team included it for

two reasons. First, we again intended to dedicate an entire weekend to the topic. The team

felt the extra time given to administration would help take the training beyond skills

training and move it into something that involved a holistic ministry practice. Second, the

team also knew that many youth pastor are weak in the area of administration. So while

this topic might slip into a skills-based lesson, a severe lack of administrative abilities can

hinder one's ministry. Finally, the team did not feel as if we could leave off teaching

youth pastors how to grow and teach their students to be disciples of Jesus Christ. All of

the rest would be meaningless if a youth minister did not understand the basic principles

of discipling adolescents.

The ASM *learning goals* are as follows:

1. Self-Understanding, gifts, and strengths;

2. Theology of youth ministry;

3. Vision; having and sharing;

4. Administration; and,

5. Discipleship.

The historical, theological, and historical analysis supports the education and training of our children. To this end a team of ministers from the North Alabama Conference designed and implemented the ASM. The particulars of this Academy are detailed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLGY

Problem and Purpose

Youth ministers have few training options beyond the large commitment required for degree training or the limited scope offered by annual skills-based training events. The problem is a lack of comprehensive nondegreed training opportunities for youth ministers. This lack of training leads to a lower quality of ministry for adolescents, shorter tenures for youth ministers, and poorly equipped ministers. The purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate a nine-month, nondegree training program for youth ministers in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill the purpose of this study, three research questions have been identified.

Research Question #1

What level of affective and cognitive competence do youth ministers have before they begin the training program?

The answer to this question provided the starting point for measuring the youth workers' understanding of the learning goals as they relate to their ministry context. All participants were assessed prior to beginning the ASM to determine their grasp of these concepts.

Research Question #2

What level of affective and cognitive competence do youth ministers have after they complete the training program?

ASM was started to train youth ministers for effective youth ministry. The goal was that upon completion the participants would have a greater understanding of the learning goals. Upon completion of the ASM weekends, all participants retook the initial questionnaire and the changes in their answers were recorded.

Research Question #3

What parts of the training program were the most effective?

Assuming the answer to question two indicates a change, either positive or negative, the final goal of this project was to determine if this change can be related to participation in the ASM. Further, if a correlation is determined, what aspects of ASM caused the change in the youth ministers' level of understanding?

Population and Participants

The population of this study was all youth ministers in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. I mailed brochures to all of the United Methodist churches in North Alabama. The ASM was also advertised in district newsletters and on the conference's Web Site. The participants were self-selected when they entered the ASM. The number of participants was the number of ministers who signed up for the ASM with the maximum number of participants set at twenty.

Design of the Study

Instrumentation

This was a pre-post nonexperimental study in the descriptive mode that utilized a researcher-designed questionnaire. The tabulation of the surveys provided an indication of the participants' level of competency for the learning goals of the ASM. Participants were tested before they began the ASM. Upon completion of the ASM, participants were

tested again and interviewed individually and in focus groups. In addition, the participants provided written feedback at the close of each weekend.

Pilot Test

For the pilot test, I administered the questionnaire to four people on the staff of Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church: two support staff and two pastors. I waited one week and administered the same questionnaire again. In completing a pilot test, I wanted to ensure that the questions were well written and that participants understood what was being asked. The average score for the first test was 35.2. The average score for the second test was 40.1. This number is an increase of 14 percent in the average score. This deviation falls within the acceptable range of deviation. After the participants completed the second test, I also asked them if any part of the questionnaire was confusing or could be improved upon. All of the participants said no.

Reliability

The independent variable for this project was the training of youth ministers. This variable was operationalized as the ASM. The ASM consisted of five Friday night and Saturday training events. Participants were expected to attend all five weekends. The ASM design team formed each weekend around specific learning goals. The team chose goals that would include the competencies necessary for an effective youth ministry program. The dependent variable was youth ministry. We operationalized the variable as the affective and cognitive competence of the participants. Intervening variables that may have affected the outcome of this study included the previous training of the participants, their previous experience in youth ministry, the contexts within which they minister, and personal demographics.

Data Collection

Upon registering in ASM, participants received a packet of information, which included a questionnaire. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire before they began to read the other materials in the packet. I instructed them to bring the completed questionnaire to the first weekend.

To maintain statistical validity, participants did not put their names on the questionnaires. Instead, they put the last three digits of their Social Security numbers.

The questionnaire asked for information about age, gender, place of ministry, educational level, experience in ministry, and other intervening variables, so that these items could be taken into account in the results of the study.

Data Analysis

After the secretary had put all of the data into the computer program, the information was returned to me in this computer format. With the help of Dr. Chris Kiesling, I analyzed and interpreted the results. The data was summarized with frequency distributions and descriptive statistics. The analysis included not only the quantitative information but also the brief qualitative information, that is, the written answers required by some of the questions.

Ethical Procedures

On the first weekend, I designated a person to collect the questionnaires.

Upon completion of the ASM, the students again received copies of the questionnaire, and they turned these into another designated person as they were leaving the final weekend of training. In addition, the participants learned that I would never see their questionnaires. Because the questionnaires were identified by the last three digits of

the participants Social Security number, no one, including my secretary, knew who completed the individual surveys.

All of the questionnaires were placed in a sealed manila envelope and given to a transcriber. She transferred their data into two formats Microsoft-Word and Microsoft-Excel. I worked only with the data as it appeared in these two programs. The transcriber deleted all of her electronic copies of the data after she had given them to me. The transcriber kept all of the hard copies of the questionnaires in a locked filling cabinet. When this dissertation was approved and completed, all hard copies were destroyed. I worked with only the electronic copies of the data but did have access to the hard copies when necessary. I kept three electronic copies of all the data in three separate locations. All locations were password protected. Upon approval and completion of this dissertation all of the electronic copies were deleted.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Ministering to adolescents can be particularly challenging, especially in today's culture. In order to present a well-rounded ministry the youth minister should provide a variety of avenues for spiritual development, everything from large group programming, to small group Christian discipleship, and opportunities for Christian fellowship. All of these avenues must also meet the varied spiritual needs and levels of interest of the youth. American culture fosters an atmosphere that encourages our students to be busier than ever (Ginsburg and Jablow 37). Today's youth have more options for varied distractions than any previous generation. School, sports teams, clubs, friends, family, Internet, text messages, music, e-mail, and entertainment anywhere at anytime vie for their attention and loyalty. All of these distractions are supported by a marketing industry that pays billions of dollars to get their attention ("Advertising").

Youth ministers have few, if any, options beyond the large commitment required for degree training and the limited scope offered by annual training events. The problem, then, is a lack of comprehensive nondegree training opportunities for youth ministers, which can lead to a lower quality of ministry for adolescents, shorter tenures for youth ministers, lower levels of job satisfaction, and poorly equipped youth ministers.

The purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate the Academy for Student Ministry, a nine-month nondegree training program for youth ministers in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. Three research questions were identified for this ministry project: What level of affective and cognitive

competence do youth ministers have before they begin the training program? What level of affective and cognitive competence do youth ministers have after they complete the training program? What parts of the training program were the most effective?

Profile of Subjects

While the academy was open to any youth minister, it was actually only advertised to youth ministers of the North Alabama Conference. Consequently, the programs participants were from churches in North Alabama. North Alabama Conference has 836 churches, 427 of which are known to have youth in their membership.

By responding to advertisements about the ASM participants were self-selected. Nine youth ministers enrolled in the ASM. Of these nine youth ministers three were full-time, three were part-time, and three were volunteer youth ministers. One minister was female and eight were male. All nine participants were Caucasian and had graduated with undergraduate degrees. None had ever attended a seminary or divinity school, and none had studied youth ministry in a university setting. The median age was between 21 and 30. The participants' experience levels varied greatly. Some had worked as youth ministers for three years or fewer and others for more than ten years. Their youth group sizes in their individual churches ranged from six to forty.

Instrumentation

A survey containing thirty questions was the apparatus used to collect data for this research project. Academy participants completed the survey before they began ASM and again after they completed the Academy. Twelve of the questions related to the profile of the subjects and their ministerial strengths. Seven questions measured the participants' level of cognitive competence as it relates to their perceived abilities in youth ministry.

The remaining eleven questions measured the subjects' affective competence as it relates to youth ministry. Participants used a five-point Likert scale to rate all of the questions that related to cognitive and affective competence. Of the nineteen cognitive and affective questions, eight also included essay-style questions. Given the small number of participants, the essay questions enabled me to see more clearly the effects of the program in the lives of the participants and to determine if there was significance to the scores when numerical significance, because of the size of the group, was difficult to achieve. Each essay answer was scored on its quality using a one to five scale with one being the highest and two being the lowest.

My method for assigning numerical values to the essays was as follows. I distributed copies of the youth ministers' answers to the ASM team for 2008-09. The answers were not marked as either pretest or posttest answers. We worked as a group to assign a numerical score of 1-5 to each youth minister's essay answers. The group was instructed to focus the basis for their evaluations on the individual's grasp of basic youth ministry concepts and philosophies, not on particulars of theology. I followed the same procedure for other essay-type answers. I also counted the number of words used in the essay answers. A longer answer does not necessarily mean a better answer; however, it does imply a participant's thoughtfulness and forethought towards a particular topic.

Response Data

All of the participants' scores were higher after they completed the ASM. Figure 1 indicates the prescores and postscores on all questions related to cognitive and affective competences. The figure shows that the students improved in every category.
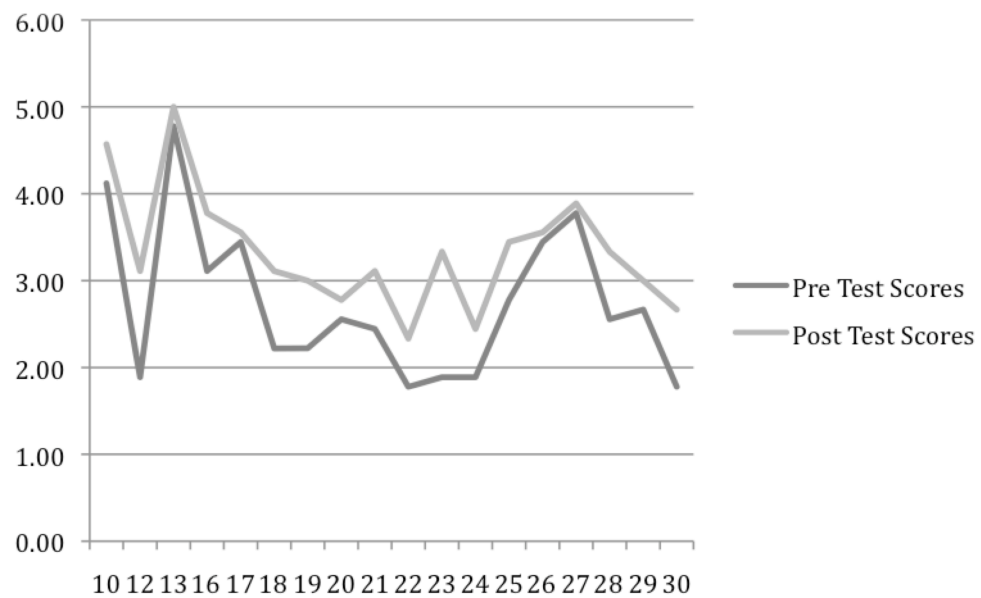
Figure 1. Test scores before and after ASM.

As Table 2 indicates, the average change in the participants' responses increased in the composite, cognitive, and affective scores. The pretest mean for composite scores was 49.2, and the posttest mean was 59.78, representing a mean difference of over ten points. The mean score for pretest cognition was 23.22, and the posttest mean was 25.56. This difference in score represents a 2.34 difference. The affective pretest mean was 26 while the posttest mean was 34.22. This increase in scores represents a more significant change of 8.22

Table 2. Composite, Cognitive, and Affective Test Scores

Composite Scores	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pretest	9	49.22	9.71825	3.23942	15.19	8	.000	49.22222	41.7521	56.69
Postest	9	59.78	13.24554	4.41518	13.53	8	.000	59.77778	49.5964	69.96
Cognition										
Pretest	9	23.22	4.26549	1.42183	16.33	8	.000	23.22222	19.9435	26.50
Postest	9	25.56	4.77261	1.59087	16.06	8	.000	25.55556	21.8870	29.22
Affect										
Pretest	9	26.00	6.24500	2.08167	12.49	8	.000	26.00000	21.1997	30.80
Postest	9	34.22	9.32440	3.10813	11.01	8	.000	34.22222	27.0549	41.39

Figure 2 shows the average increase in score based on test question. The average score

increased for every question. Questions 12, 18, 23, and 30 had the greatest increases of

all the questions:

      12. Describe God's calling to you to do youth ministry.
      18. In your opinion, why should the church provide special ministries to youth?
      23. In your opinion, what factors in today's youth culture affect the faith
development of your youth in a positive way?
      30. Briefly summarize your plan for youth ministry for the coming year.

Each of these questions measured the participants' affective levels. The higher affective

scores points to the fact that participants may have improved more than they realized.
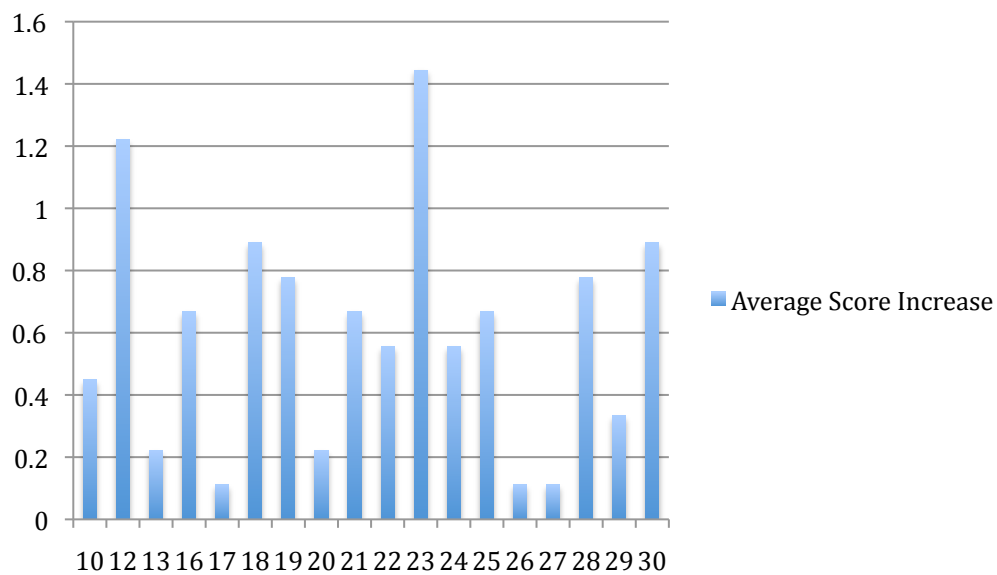
Figure 2. Average score increase.

Students also wrote longer answers on all essay questions after they completed the ASM. The length of answers for the affective questions showed the greatest increase. Figure 3 shows the average increase in the length of the essays that the participants wrote in response to the questions calling for essays.
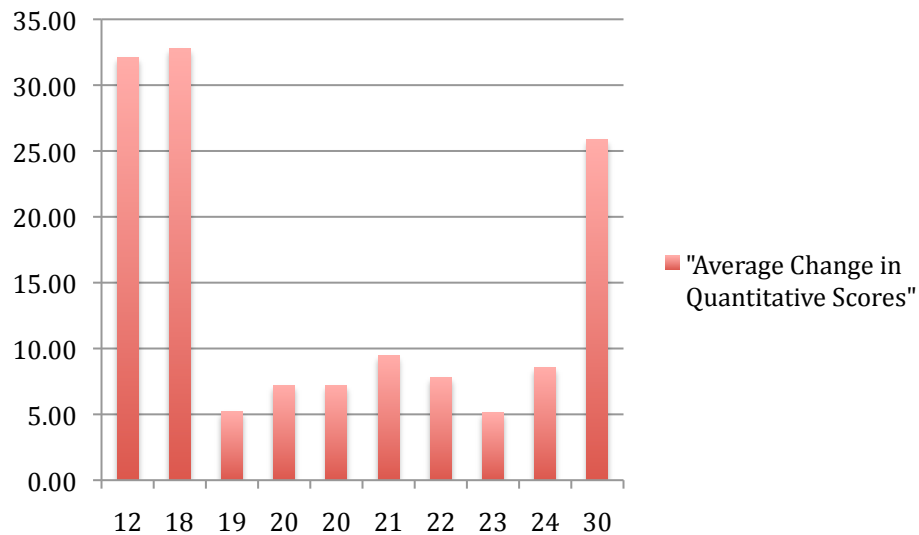
Figure 3. Average change in quantitative score.

The participants had a wide range of experience as it related to youth ministry. The scores' increase was greater for participants with less than four years of youth ministry experience. Table 3 shows that the average improvement was greater for those attendees with fewer years of experience. Those with three years or less experience improved their average scores by fourteen points while individuals with four years or more experience improved their average scores by 9.57 points.

Table 3. Pre- and Postest Scores Based on Years of Youth Ministry Experience

	Pretest	**Posttest**	**Change**
1 to 3 years experience	38.00	52	14.00
4 or more years experience	52.43	62	9.57

I noticed certain statistical trends as I analyzed the data. I grouped five of the questions into two subcategories as they related to participants' clarity of their personal call to youth ministry and their plans or goals for their ministry over the next year:

11. How confident are you that God has called you to minister to youth?
12. Describe God's calling to you to do youth ministry.
13. As you minister to youth, how important to you is God's calling?
29. How precise a plan do you have for your youth ministry for the coming year?
30. Briefly summarize your plan for youth ministry for the coming year.

As Table 4 shows, both the quality and quantity of the answers for questions that related to youth directors' calling and to their plan for the next year increased significantly. The increase in the length of their essays was more notable than the increase in the quality of the essays.

Table 4. Pre- and Postest Scores Concerning Participants' Calling and Long-Range Planning

	Pretest Average	Postest Average	Change
Quality of answer for describing God's call	1.9	3.1	1.2
Length of answer for describing God's call	22.0	54.1	32.1
Quality of answer for next year's plan	1.8	3.0	1.2
Length of answer for next year's plan	14.4	40.3	25.9

Two of the questions were about special ministries to youth:

18. In your opinion, why should the church provide special ministries to youth?
27. How well do you think you communicate about youth ministry with groups in your church such as the trustees, the administrative board, the youth council, and the nominating committee?

In one question, I asked participants to describe why churches should provide specialized ministry to youth. In a later question I asked how effectively they are able to communicate with the committees and boards of their churches about the need for specialized youth ministry.

Table 5 shows that the length and quality of the responses to the question about the need for specialized youth ministries increased substantially. Table 5 also shows no corresponding substantial increase in their estimate of their ability to communicate the need for special ministries to youth to their churches' boards and committees .

Table 5. Pre- and Postest Scores of Participants' Ability to Describe the Need for Youth Ministry

	Pretest Average	Posttest Average	Change
Quality of answer for describing the need for age level youth ministry	2.2	3.1	.9
Length of answer describing the need for age level youth ministry	10.7	19.2	8.5
Quality of the answer for how well they think they communicate	3.8	3.9	.1

Summary of Significant Findings

The first significant finding is an average overall increase in scores.

The second significant finding is that the study program was more effective for less experienced than for more experienced youth ministers.

The third finding is that the participants wrote much longer essays about their sense of calling after completing the program.

The fourth finding is that, after completing the program, participants wrote much longer, more detailed plans for their ministry in the coming year.

The fifth significant finding is that, after completing the program, students wrote better essays about the need for specialized ministries to youth.

The final finding is that participants did not judge that, after completing the course, they were better able to communicate effectively to their church's boards and committees the need for specialized youth ministries.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The origin of this research project can be traced to the needs of youth ministers in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. The ASM team believed that youth ministers would benefit from a program of training that fell between a one-day, skills-based workshop and a full-degree program in a university setting. The team wanted a program that would be relevant to full-time, part-time, and volunteer youth ministers. The ASM team who designed and implemented the study program included me as conference youth coordinator, two elders in the United Methodist Church, one deacon in the church, a full-time youth minister in the church, and the director of church relations for Birmingham-Southern College. The study program was carried out over five weekends from August 2007 until May 2008. While twelve youth ministers participated in parts of the program, only nine of them completed the program. The program has been evaluated in terms of its contribution to those nine.

Major Findings

The major findings of this study are presented under five headings. The first is the overall increase in scores. The second concerns the effectiveness of the study program for less experienced youth ministers. The third concerns the ability of participants to express a sense of calling. The fourth concerns their ability to articulate a plan for their ministry in the coming year. The last concerns their ability to articulate the church's need for a specialized youth ministry.

In the year before this study, nineteen students completed the ASM program, and twenty-four students are enrolled in the ASM program this year. The fact that only nine students completed the program during the year of this study limits the generalizability of the findings of the study. Nevertheless, I believe that the findings are valuable and could prove useful to others who might wish to design similar programs in the future. Moreover, the small size of the group provided an opportunity for all of the youth ministers to engage in discussion with each other and with the teachers that probably made the study program even more effective for them than it otherwise might have been. The teachers were able to give each youth minister personalized attention and answer specific questions asked by each youth minister.

Overall Increase in Scores

The collective scores of the youth ministers increased overall from 443 to 538, an increase of ninety-five points or 21percent. The scores of eight of the nine youth ministers increased overall, and the score of the other youth minister remain unchanged. The increase in scores was across the board, on all the questions.

This increase in scores indicates that there is an overall positive experience for the youth ministers and that the study program was successful. It also shows that the ASM did, in fact, improve their affective and cognitive abilities as youth ministers. The youth ministers will speak positively to their congregations and to other youth ministers about the study program.

The Tenure of Youth Ministers

Being in smaller or larger congregations did not a have a major impact on how much the youth ministers benefited from the study program. Neither did the size of their

youth group or whether or not they worked full-time or part-time. The most important factor driving how much the youth ministers benefited from the program was their tenure. Four of the nine youth ministers had more than seven years experience in youth ministry. While they benefited from the study program, their scores did not increase as much as the scores of the five with less experience. This outcome was not unexpected; in any training setting, those who begin with greater knowledge or experience may progress at a slower rate. The implications for the ASM are that the program does help youth ministers with less experience more than it helps ministers with more experience. The core concepts were chosen because they were basic to youth ministry. The youth pastors with greater experience had a greater grasp of these core concepts before they began the ASM.

For example, question 23 states, "In your opinion, what factors in today's youth culture affect the faith development of your youth in a positive way?" The four more experienced youth ministers achieved an increase of four points on this question, an average of 1.0 point each. The five less experienced youth ministers achieved an increase of nine points on this question, an average of 1.8 points each.

Given these results, the North Alabama Conference should consider doing one of two things. First, they could offer tracks within the ASM for ministers with more or less education. If participants had three years or less of ministry experience, they could take track "A," which would be similar to the current ASM. If participants had four or more years of experience, they could take track "B," which would focus on a more advanced set of learning goals. Second, the conference could offer an ASM II for those youth pastors who have completed ASM I and who have more than three years of youth ministry experience.

A Sense of Calling

Three questions on the questionnaire were related to calling: (1) How confident are you that God has called you to minister to youth; (2) describe God's calling to you to do youth ministry; (3) as a minister to youth, how important to you is God's calling. The first and third questions received numerical answers; the second question was answered with a brief essay to which I assigned a numerical value.

The first and third questions had little change. All felt confident of their calling even before beginning the program, and all felt that God's calling to them was important.

On the second question, the youth ministers collectively gave answers that were twice as long after the program as before. This outcome was true even though two of them wrote longer responses before the study program than after. The numerical average in the answers went from seventeen to twenty eight, an increase of 64 percent.

For example, before the study program began, one youth minister cryptically wrote of God's calling to her as follows: "Gifts given. Opportunities offered. Sense of God's presence in the midst in youth ministry." Following the completion of the study program, she gave a more thoughtful response:

> As a college student who had been working with youth, and finding great joy, I was leading a small group at Officer's Camp and had a conversation with a pastor appointed to youth ministry about call. I was feeling an energetic tug on my life which was indescribable. During the week I spent a great deal of time in prayer about the changes ministry might bring in my life and "career track" and tried to observe others and myself (yes, an out of body experience of sorts) to identify gifts and graces. As I led my group in an exercise describing and time-lining God's presence in their lives, I began to realize that the most joyful and satisfying times of my own life were times I was in youth ministry--as a participant and a leader. I also observed that the times I was most faithful to my spiritual disciplines I was preparing for or leading youth ministry. My love for worship (I was writing children's curriculum on worship at the time) and teaching (I was preparing for a teaching degree) were (duh!) already

> telling me that God was using and preparing me for ministry. Great times! Great experiences! None like them!

Her statements suggest that the program enabled this youth minister to reflect upon her calling with more self-awareness and to articulate her calling more fully and thoughtfully than before.

We had twelve participants sign up for and attend the first ASM. Of those twelve only nine completed the program. The scores of the three youth minister's that dropped out were not included in this study. If I had given these three dropouts posttest that their scores, as they relate to ministry calling, may have changed dramatically. These participants may have dropped out of the program because as a result of the program they realized that they were not truly called to youth ministry.

A Plan for Ministry

When asked to rate how precise a plan they had for their ministries in the coming year, the participants' average score did not change. However, when asked to summarize their plan for the coming year, the quality of their answers improved and the amount of detailed information they provided about their plan quadrupled. This change in quality and quantity suggests that the study program helped them even more than they realized.

For example, before the study program began, one youth minister wrote simply, "I plan to become involved in the lives of my youth." Following the program, he wrote, "I am at a new job. I plan to organize the volunteers and start small groups with the ministry. I want to have everyone understand the different commitment levels of those we target."

Before the study program began, another youth minister wrote twenty-three words in very general terms about outreach, spiritual growth, and missions. Following the study

program, that same youth minister wrote 155 words describing an annual calendar, by quarters, with specific activities related to each of these factors assigned to each quarter.

These responses and others like them suggest that the teachers and the text for the study program alerted youth ministers to the importance of long-range planning and to the dramatic affect it can have on their ministries. It also provided them with more resources for planning their ministry. Understanding the importance of long-range planning is important because the transient nature of youth ministry and the kinds of persons who are drawn to youth ministry result in a situation in which much youth ministry is not planned farther in advance than the next event.

The Church's Need for Special Ministries to Youth

The questionnaire contained one question about specialized youth ministry: In your opinion, why should the church provide special ministries to youth? I assigned numerical values to the answers. The quality of the average answer went from 2.22 to 3.1, an increase of 39 percent. The collective word count of the answers went from 203 to 498, an increase of 145 percent; the average answer went from 22.6 words to 55.3 words.

For example, before the study program, one youth minister wrote, "Kids need a safe place to go where they are accepted and loved." Afterwards he wrote, "I think it is important for youth to be able to develop a community with each other, to share their struggles and their victories with each other. And to encourage each other in their faith walk." After the study program another youth minister wrote, "Youth is one such group of people who happen to be in a critical time of their lives where they are often making important decisions that will form who they are as adults." These responses and others like them suggest that the youth ministers developed an increased sensitivity to the

importance of having special ministries for youth in churches and increased skill in articulating the need for such ministries.

The ability to articulate and understand the need for specialized youth ministry is important. Many untrained youth pastors do not take the time to think about and understand why the church should provide special ministries for its adolescents. Most youth pastors know why intuitively, but they rarely take the time to articulate the need. Because the participants improved significantly in this area I believe it will lead to even greater learning opportunities for them in the future. It also gives them greater skill in educating their volunteers and their church in why youth ministry is so important.

Even though the participants wrote better essays about the need for specialized youth ministry, they did not improve significantly in how well they thought they communicated youth ministry to their boards and agencies. When I first realized these results, I concluded that the participants had improved in their knowledge of youth minister to a greater degree than what they realized. Upon further analysis they may not be correct assumptions. Question number 26 actually reads, "How well do you think you communicate about youth ministry with groups in your church such as the trustees, the administrative board, and the nominating committee?" Participants may have been answering more about their communication skills and the need to increase communication with these boards than they were answering about their actual grasp of the youth ministry topics. Question 26 may need to be reworded to grasp fully the participant's understanding of their own cognitive abilities.

Unexpected Observations

Each Friday evening of the ASM after the evening sessions and programs had ended, the participants participated in *roundtable discussions*. The participants were asked to sit in an informal setting in self-selected groups of three to four. The groups were given three to four questions to answer in their group. The questions usually present ministry case studies based on the topic present by the speaker that evening. Three times the presenter designed the questions; two times I designed the questions.

In my test questionnaires, I did not ask any questions concerning these roundtables. I did not anticipate that the students would change significantly as a result of these groups. In many ways the tables were intended to build community more than they were intended to impart knowledge. However, through interviews at the weekends, and in post ASM interviews, most participants rated these roundtables as their favorite thing about the weekends. They appreciated the time to work through situations with other youth pastors. These case studies helped the participants to take what they had learned in the sessions and apply them to their specific ministry context. It also gave them the opportunity to apply this new knowledge to similar situations in other areas of youth ministry.

Conclusion

Youth ministers benefited from a program of study that is more extensive than a one-day skills-based workshop but less extensive than a degree program in a university. In my judgment, five weekends was a good length for this study program.

Youth ministers with long and short tenure all profit from such a program, but those with short tenure profit the most. This increased benefit suggests that such

programs should include studying, not only innovative or advanced ideas about youth ministry, but especially basic concepts of youth ministry such as understanding oneself and one's and strengths, developing a theology of youth ministry, and having and sharing a vision, affective administration, and growing disciples.

The size of the study group was nine youth ministers. Given that they did experience improvement during the program, I have no reason to think that the group's size was too small. Of course, it is possible for a similar study to achieve equally good results from a larger group.

Altogether ten teachers led these studies. One might think that a large number of teachers would lead to a sense of fragmentation. I received no indications that this fragmentation occurred. Students apparently benefited from the fact that these ten teachers were experts in the subjects about which they spoke.

The youth ministers reported to me privately and informally that they enjoyed many aspects of the study program. They singled out the roundtable discussions of case studies as especially enjoyable and helpful.

The questionnaire included questions about cognitive and affective matters. The scores of affective matters improved much more dramatically than the scores of cognitive matters. This increase suggests that students were less aware than they might have been of the benefits they were receiving from the program. A good strategy for persons planning this kind of study program is to identify means of making students aware of the cognitive benefits they are receiving by participating in the study program; this planning should further increase their appreciation for the program.

One anomaly of the findings of this study is that although the youth ministers dramatically improved their ability to articulate the need for special ministries to youth, they indicated that they felt very little improvement in their ability to articulate this need to the boards and committees in their congregations. They also indicated that they felt very little improvement in their estimate of their overall effectiveness as youth minister.

These things suggest that while the abilities of the youth ministers were improving, their awareness of that improvement and their confidence in it were not increasing. This lack of awareness suggests that future programs might incorporate devices for helping youth ministers become more self-aware about the improvement of their skills.

APPENDIX A

FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire has been designed to provide information for a study being conducted by Myrle Grate, the former Conference Youth Coordinator, to improve the effectiveness of the Academy for Student Ministry. Please fill out the questionnaire before you begin reading your pre-class assignments. Please answer all questions. You may use either a pen or pencil. You do not need to be anxious about your answers because what is being sought is your opinions about these matters; in addition, all answers will be held in confidence, and no one, including the Coordinator, will know which person filled out which questionnaire. Please put the last three digits of your Social Security number on your questionnaire, but please *do not* put your name anywhere on the questionnaire.

1. List the last three digits of your Social Security number: _____.

2. What is your gender: Female
                        Male

3. What is your age?   20 or younger
                      21 – 30
                      31 – 40
                      41 or older

4. Do you have an earned degree in youth ministry? Yes
                                                No

5. Do you have an M.Div. degree?   Yes
                                No

6. Have you ever attended any of the following training events, circle all that apply?
                None
                National Youth Workers Convention
                Pass it On
                Youth 07 (or alternate year)
                The Core
                Perkins School of Youth Ministry
                Purpose Driven Youth Ministry
                Other

7. Approximately how many years of experience do you have in working with youth ages 12-19? Do not include years of parenting, but do include years of working both with church groups and with non-church groups such as Scouts and school teaching.

      3 years or fewer
      4 – 6 years
      7 – 9 years
      10 or more years

8. Approximately how many youth are in your church's youth group? Count each individual who shows up in an average week for all youth activities including Sunday School, choir, fellowship time, and so on.

      1 – 10
      11 – 24
      25 – 40
      41 – 60
      61 or more

9. How many people attend worship services in an average week in your church?

      50 or fewer
      51 - 150
      151 - 301
      301 or more

10. What persuaded you to sign up for ASM? Check all that apply.

      Communication from your district office
      Printed material from the conference office
      E-mail announcements
      Someone in your church encouraged you
      Your pastor encouraged you
      Your supervisor encouraged you
      Someone who took ASM in an earlier year encouraged you
      Other. Please describe: _____

11. How confident are you that God has called you to minister to youth?

      Very confident
      Confident
      Reasonably confident
      Not very confident
      I do not feel called to minister to youth

12. Describe God's calling to you to do youth ministry.

_____

_____

_____

13. As you minister to youth, how important to you is God's calling?
                Very important
                Important
                Reasonably important
                Not very important
                God's calling is not important to my youth ministry

14. List the three greatest strengths you possess, as you understand them, that equip you to minister to youth.

1. _____   2. _____   3. _____

15. How confident are you that these are your greatest strengths as a youth minister?
                Very confident
                Confident
                Reasonably confident
                Not very confident
                These are not my greatest strengths

16. How well equipped do you think you are for being a youth minister?
                Very well equipped
                Well equipped
                Reasonably equipped
                Not well equipped
                I do not feel well equipped for being a youth minister

17. How effective do you think you are as a youth minister?
                Very effective
                Effective
                Reasonably effective
                Not very effective
                I am not an effective youth minister

18. In your opinion, why should the church provide special ministries to youth?

_____

_____

_____

19. What are the most important biblical and theological themes that you hope to communicate to your youth group?

_____

_____

_____

20. What are the most important things you would like to see happen in the individual lives of the young people in your church?

_____

_____

_____

21. What are the most important things you would like to see happen in your youth group as a whole?

_____

_____

_____

22. List 3-5 values that characterize your youth ministry as a whole.

_____

_____

_____

23. In your opinion, what factors in today's youth culture affect the faith development of your youth in a positive way?

_____

_____

_____

24. In your opinion, what factors in today's youth culture affect the faith development of your youth in a negative way?

_____

_____

_____

25. How well do you think you manage your time?
> Very well
> Well
> Reasonably well
> Not very well
> I do not manage my time well

26. How well do you think you organize and coordinate youth events such as retreats, lock-ins, and mission trips?
> Very well
> Well
> Reasonably well
> Not very well
> I do not organize and coordinate events well

27. How well do you think you communicate about youth ministry with groups in your church such as the trustees, the administrative board, the youth council, and the nominating committee?
> Very well
> Well
> Reasonably well
> Not very well
> I do not communicate with ministry groups well

28. If you were planning a mission trip for your youth group, where would you turn for information and support?

_____

29. How precise a plan do you have for your youth ministry for the coming year?
                Very precise
                Precise
                Reasonably precise
                Not very precise
                I do not have a plan for the upcoming year

30. Briefly summarize your plan for youth ministry for the coming year.
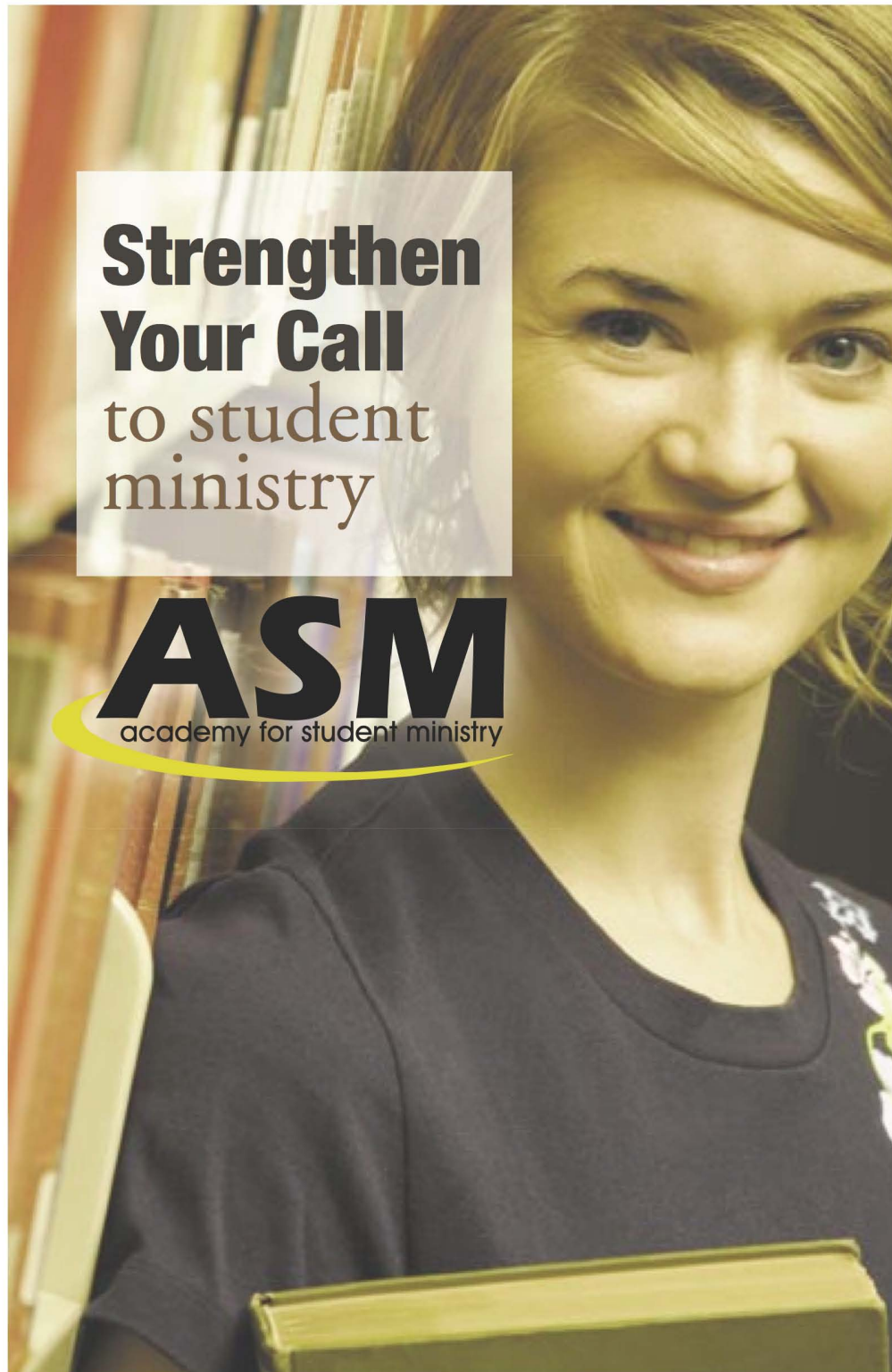
_____

_____

_____

Thank you for filling out this questionnaire.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE BROCHURE

Strengthen your call to student ministry:

North Alabama Conference Youth Ministry and Birmingham-Southern College have joined together to provide quality training for adults who work with youth in local United Methodist churches. The Academy for Student Ministry (ASM) is a series of five sessions designed to equip persons for United Methodist ministry to youth.

ASM is an in-depth time for study about youth ministry. It helps strengthen a person's call to ministry as well as give hands-on ideas and support for on-going ministry. It will be inspirational as well as practical and relevant to where youth and youth ministry are today.

The Academy requires a serious time commitment of five Friday-Saturday events coupled with debriefing times at the local church. Using the strongest leadership in the area, including college professors, nationally known speakers, clergy, and local youth veterans, class members will receive training needed for effective youth ministry in their local church.

Each year the Academy will be held at a local church in the North Alabama Conference. Future Academies will be held in Florence and Birmingham respectively.

ASM academy for student ministry

BSC Birmingham-Southern College

An investment your ministry

The approximate cost per person for The Academy for Student ministry is **$400.**

This includes:
- Food and lodging
- Seminars and group modules
- On site follow up consultations for one year
- Over $200 worth of books including:

Now Discover Your Strengths - Buckingham and Clifton

The Godbearing Life - Foster/Dean

What Every Teacher Needs to Know About ...
- Complete Set

Experiential Youth Ministry Handbook - John Losey

My First Two Years in Youth Ministry - Doug Fields

UMYF Handbook - Michael Selleck

Youth Ministry Management Tools - Olson, Elliot, Work

Safe Sanctuaries for Youth
- Joy Melton (Discipleship Resources)

Faith Forming Junior High Ministry - Drew Dyson

Emerging Worship - Dan Kimball

One-year subscription to *Group* magazine!

Requirements for attendance and certification of completion

- Attendance at each weekend and all seminars
- Active Mentor and Support Group
- Support of Senior Pastor and PPR or SPR Chairpers

Sample Schedule

Friday

6:30	Dinner
7:30	Worship and Communion
8:30	Opening Session
9:30	Roundtable Discussion
10:30	Free

Saturday

8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30	Gathering and Fellowship
9:00	Worship
9:30	Session
11:00	Break
11:30	Lunch (eat out)
1:00 p.m.	Workshop
3:00	Closing

Dates

September 28-29, 2007
Listening, The What of Student Ministry
Alan Head

November 30 - December 1, 2007
Understanding the Why of Student Ministry
Terry Carty

February 29 - March 1, 2008
Dreaming Our Call
Kenda Creasy Dean

March 28-29, 2008
Acting I - Doing Student Ministry
Mark Puckett & Mike Selleck

May 2-3, 2008
Acting II - Doing Student Ministry
Duffy Robbins

Seminar Facilitors

Kenda Creasy Dean

Kenda Creasy Dean has authored several youth ministry books — the most notable being *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending of Youth Ministry*. She is an assistant professor of youth, church, and culture in the field of practical theology and Christian education at Princeton Seminary. An ordained United Methodist mininster, she is a member of hte Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference. Active in youth ministry ecumencially, nation-ally, and locally, she is a frequent preacher, speaker, and theologian with you and youthworkers.

Duffy Robbins

Duffy Robins is a national speaker for countless student ministry training events and has authored dozens of classic works in the area of student ministries. Don't miss a great opportunity to meet with him on a more personal level.

Mike Selleck

Mike Selleck is the Director of Connec-tional Ministries for the North Georgia Conference, a verter student minister, one of the founders of the Student Academy Model for teaching and the author of the *Handbook for Youth Ministry in the United Methodist Church*.

Terry Carty

Tery Carty is the Director of Ministries with Young People for the United Methodist Church. Terry has been in student ministry for more than 20 years and travels the country leading and teaching adult workers with students.

Alan Head

Alan Head is currently the Senior Pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church in Tuscaloosa, Ala. His quick wit and creativity have made him a widely respected preacher and speaker. A gifted storyteller, he will lead you down roads that will change your life.

Mark Puckett

Park Puckett has a BS in History/Political Science from the University of West Alabama and an M.Div. from Memphis Theologi-cal Seminary. He has 12 years of experience as a Youth Pastor in rural, small town and suburbian ministry situations. He currently serves as a pastor in the North Alabama Conference.

Things to bring:

- Bible
- Notepad
- Pen/Pencil
- Academy Binder

- Assigned Readings
- Toiletries & Bedding
  *(if you're staying at
  the church)*

Directions

The 2007/2008 session of The Academy for Student Ministry will be held at Decatur First United Methodist Church in Decatur, Ala.

The church is loedated at 805 Canal Street in the historic section of Decatur. It is one block over from Bank Street and adjacent to the historic Old State Bank.
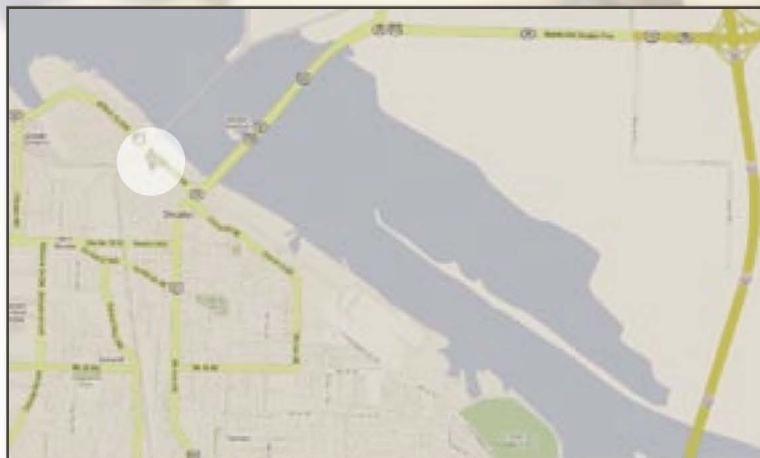
Information

For more information on The Academy for Student Ministry, contact:

Myrle Grate, Coordinator of Youth Ministires
mgrate@northalabamaumc.org
205-226-7972 • 1-800-239-7950

ASM
academy for student ministry

Registration

Fill out the form below and return with $400 to:

Myrle Grate, Coordinator of Youth Ministires
North Alabama Conference
898 Arkadelphia Road
Birmingham, AL 35204

Name: _____

Church Name: _____

District: _____

Address, City, ZIP: _____

Day Phone: _____

Evening Phone: _____

Email: _____

Gender: _____

Will you be sleeping at the church Friday eveing?: _____

Affiliation with your church's Student Ministry: _____

_____

BSC
Birmingham-Southern College

North Alabama Conference
The United Methodist Church
898 Arkadelphia Road
Birmingham, AL **35204**

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APPENDIX C

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

August 2007

Welcome to the Academy for Student Ministry! The ASM team is excited that you want to deepen your skills and spiritual maturity by participating in the ASM for North Alabama. You are in our thoughts and prayers as we prepare for the first weekend, September 28 & 29 at Decatur First United Methodist Church.

Directions to the church are enclosed in this packet. If you will be staying at the church Friday evening, please let us know as soon as possible.

Support from your place of service and friends in ministry is essential to the success of the Academy for Student Ministry. There are four mentor forms enclosed for you to fill out and turn in at the first Academy weekend: pastor, adult volunteer with youth ministry, any mentor of your choosing, and Staff Parrish Relations committee. Please be in prayer about who can guide you during this Academy.

Your pastor mentor, adult volunteer mentor, and mentor of your choice will comprise your *Support Team*. Your *Support Team* will help you process what you have learned at each Academy and then contextualize it for your ministry setting.

Responsibilities of the ASM Support Team:

1. Pray for participant
2. Each ASM participant should articulate, through a letter, their hopes and expectations for youth ministry in their church
3. Meet at least once between each Academy meeting
    a. Receive report from ASM participant
    b. Discern, as a group, how what the participant has learned can be contextualized for their church and ministry
4. Other specialized assignments based on the previous weekend's content

Work to be completed before our first weekend:

___   See enclosed note from Laura Eanes concerning your work for "Ministry by Strengths"

___   Read *Now Discover Your Strengths* by Buckingham and Clifton
The Godbearing Life by Foster/Dean (Upper Room)

___   Signed mentor agreements

What to bring:

Homework assignments, Bible, toiletries, and linens if necessary

God Be With You,

Myrle Grate
enc.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE LETTER TO PASTORS

Dear Pastor,
In many churches the youth worker has the least amount of specialized training. Because of this, we have created a training venue for adult youth workers. The Academy for Student Ministry is a series of five, Friday-Saturday retreats designed to give your student minister comprehensive training, improved resources, and a functioning student ministry network. These sessions will follow a format similar to the Academy for Congregational Development. There are many challenges to starting a new congregation let us assist you in getting your youth ministry off to a great start.
In order for your minister to attend, they will need support from you and from the chair of your PPR Committee. I am enclosing a copy of our brochure in hopes that you will consider encouraging your student minister to attend.
We are also promoting two other Youth Ministry training events; a Sabbath retreat for youth workers (Well/Being), and the National Youth Workers Convention in Atlanta, GA. We hope you will consider sending your leaders to at least two of these events each year.
Grace and Peace,

Myrle Grate
Conference Youth Coordinator

- Most UM youth workers are volunteers with little or no training in youth ministry.
- The number two reason families join churches is because of excellent children and youth ministries.
- There is not a definitive curriculum for UM youth ministry (as there was in the 50s, 60s, 70s).
- Youth workers must develop their own plans but most are not equipped for Christian education.
- Most training opportunities for youth workers are short-term (i.e., Sunday afternoon district training) and tend to focus on youth group activities rather than faith formation.
- Training opportunities that offer comprehensive learning are very expensive and require traveling away from home.
- Most UM youth workers do not know about Wesleyan thought nor UMC theology and principles.
- Many UM youth workers buy programs at their local Christian bookstore. They teach a mixed theology that is often Calvinistic in nature, but don't know they are doing it.
- There is no professional forum for people who work in this field.
- Youth workers often feel isolation.
- Inexperienced youth workers are not in contact with those who are experienced.
- Many youth workers eventually feel they do not have an advocate to speak out on their behalf.

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE MENTOR CONTRACT

Clergy Mentor Form

As a part of my study in the Academy for Student Ministry I have chosen
_____ as my clergy mentor. I covenant to meet regularly with my
mentor at a time and place that is mutually agreeable, to be punctual, and to use the gift of time with my
mentor wisely and prayerfully. I agree to meet at least once per month during my study in the ASM
program.

_____   _____
Signature   Signature of Mentor

Adult Youth Worker Mentor Form

As a part of my study in the Academy for Student Ministry I have chosen
_____ as my lay mentor. I covenant to meet regularly with my mentor
at a time and place that is mutually agreeable, to be punctual, and to use the gift of time with my mentor
wisely and prayerfully. I agree to meet at least once per month during my study in the ASM program.

_____   _____
Signature   Signature of Mentor

Mentor of Choice Form

As a part of my study in the Academy for Student Ministry I have chosen
_____ as my mentor of choice. I covenant to meet regularly with my
mentor at a time and place that is mutually agreeable, to be punctual, and to use the gift of time with my
mentor wisely and prayerfully. I agree to meet at least once per month during my study in the ASM
program.

_____   _____
Signature   Signature of Mentor

Staff Parrish Relations Agreement Form

As the Staff Parrish Relations Committee of a participant in the Academy for Student Ministry we
covenant to pray for this person as they participate in the ASM. We understand that they will attend
five weekend events over the next year and we give them our full support. We will do everything in our
power to help them grow during this experience.

_____   _____
Signature of Senior Pastor   Signature of SPRC Chairman

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Friday

6:30 p.m.	Supper
7:30 p.m.	Worship
8:30 p.m.	First Speaker
9:30 p.m.	Round Tables
10:00 p.m.	Free

Saturday

8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 a.m.	Morning Worship
9:00 a.m.	Second Speaker
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
12:30 p.m.	Second Speaker
3:00 p.m.	A Service of Commissioning & Dismissal

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE LETTER OF COMPLETION

Dear Pastor,

This letter is to inform you that *John Doe* has completed the Academy for Student Ministry (ASM) training seminars. As you know the ASM is comprised of five weekend training events designed to provide training for youth ministers in local United Methodist churches. As such it requires a significant time commitment from each student as they attend all of the weekend workshops, finish all assigned readings, and complete take home assignments. I am including the course syllabus and the reading list and the brochure for the upcoming training events.

The successful completion of this Academy represents a significant step in *John's* ministry career. We hope you and your congregation will join us in celebrating this accomplishment.

Sincerely,

Myrle Grate
Conference Youth Coordinator

CC: Pastor Parish Relations Committee
       District Superintendent

Enclosures

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