

NEW LIFE
Presbyterian Church

Our youth ministry...

...Business as usual?

PREFACE

If you've picked up this booklet, it's likely you have children. As a parent, it's crucial for you to know just how our church will minister to your kids.

Or perhaps you've decided to read through this booklet because working with young people is very important to you. Finding out how New Life views ministry to youth will help you know how you can fit in to what is going at our church.

Whatever specific situation has led you to pick up this booklet today, you're reading this because you care about Christian young people. And it matters to you what your church thinks about ministry to its own youth. And that's excellent. It *should* matter to you.

The purpose, then, of what you're about to read is to thoroughly explain New Life Presbyterian Church's Philosophy of Ministry to Youth. When you're finished reading, you'll know exactly what New Life's youth ministry priorities are. You'll understand why we do the things we do, as well as why we don't do some things that other churches seem to find important. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments that may come to mind as you read.

Finally, it's important to note the viewpoints expressed in this booklet represent the long term beliefs of the elders of New Life. This group of men, consisting of fathers and former youth pastors, has come to these conclusions through years of experience, research, and biblical study. We humbly offer the results to you for your consideration. Thanks for taking the time to work through these important issues with us.

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WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR CHILDREN?

Raise your hand if you'd like any of the following things to be true of the kids you care about when they have grown up and have left the house:

- He stops attending church once he gets to college.
- She bounces from church to church her whole life, because she can't find one that meets her needs.
- He finds it impossible to have meaningful relationships with anyone outside his peer group.
- She thinks any congregation that has a number of older folks is certain to be boring and out of touch.
- He believes that entertainment and excitement should be the *primary* goal of a worship service.
- She never stops to think how *she* might be able to serve the church body to which she belongs.
- He finds himself completely unprepared to handle spiritual enemies like evolution and feminism.
- She is completely unable to articulate what the Bible says she should look for in a husband.
- He puts almost no stock in the life-advice of church leaders, particularly of those who are older.
- Her moral lifestyle is not all that different from her non-Christian friends at work.
- He feels it's the church's job to train his children in the faith.

It's hard to imagine a Christian parent who would want any of those things to be said about their child one day. Even if a parent is tempted to think that some of the above scenarios are inevitable, all Christian parents hope their children will have far healthier interactions with the Church, with life, and with the world than those listed above.

THE YOUTH CRISIS IN THE CHURCH TODAY

The sad truth, however, is that more and more Christian young people are growing up to lead lives that few would describe as spiritually healthy.¹ While this may not be surprising for kids growing up in churches we would consider liberal, it may shock us to realize that this is also the case for young people growing up in evangelical churches throughout America.

The fact of the matter is that we are facing a crisis when it comes to our young people growing up in American evangelical churches. Many such children grow up to approach church-life with a consumer mentality, being most concerned about how a church can contribute to their own lives and goals. These consumer-minded young adults tend to be drawn to churches where the worship is completely entertainment driven, where the messages are *always* encouraging, and where the church program list is long enough to fill a phone book. The heartbreaking reality is that the majority of young Christian Americans no longer regard the Christian life as self sacrificial service to the Lord and His people; rather the Christian life is seen primarily as a path to personal fulfillment.²

In addition, more and more Christian young adults are finding it impossible to relate to Christians outside their own peer group. Some do not even find the idea desirable! Many are flocking to churches where the largest part of the congregation is under 35. Consequently, an alarming number of Christian young adults are choosing to avoid even the possibility of learning from the wisdom of previous generations. Rather than seeing older believers as a source of tremendous blessing like the Bible does (Job 12:12; Pro. 16:31; Pro. 23:22), an increasing amount of

¹ Mark DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 26.

² DeVries, 26, 148.

younger Christian adults are simply assuming that older folks are stuffy, out of touch, and irrelevant.

As if the things mentioned already weren't awful enough, the horrifying fact is that an increasing number of people who have grown up in Christian churches are abandoning the faith altogether.³ Many begin to drift away as soon as they leave the house for college or the work place. Completely unprepared to resist the intensity of worldly temptation or the slickness of secular philosophies, more and more young people are dumping their Christian heritage almost as soon as they stop living under their parent's roof.

Make no mistake; the American evangelical church today is experiencing a major crisis when it comes to our children. We are doing a terrible job in rearing up our Christian young people. The results of the past decade have made it clear that we're either dooming the majority of our kids to a life of perpetual spiritual immaturity or, even worse, a life apart from Christ altogether.

Yet it's not as if evangelical churches in the US have been ignoring the young people in their midst. Youth ministry has been and remains an extremely high priority in the church today. Many congregations expend large portions of their resources (money, time, manpower, etc.) in hopes of reaching and nurturing their young people. Yet even so, the youth crisis remains. What is the solution?

³ The Barna Group, *The Barna Update: Twentysomethings Struggle to Find Their Place in Christian Churches* (<http://www.barna-.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=149>). Research studies from The Barna Group indicate that 58% of teens regularly attending church now will not be attending church by their 30th birthday. With today's numbers this means that over 8,000,000 teens in a church today will not be found in any church when they turn 30.

IS MORE YOUTH MINISTRY THE SOLUTION?

Recognizing the youth crises we're facing in today's churches, many well-meaning parents and church leaders believe the solution is found in putting more effort into what we're already doing. This thinking often resembles the following:

We must have better, more relevant youth pastors. Our youth groups need to be more cutting edge, more extreme. The music we use to reach our kids must be louder and more exciting. Our churches need to find new ways to grab and hold our kids' attention. What worked for children of 15 years ago does not cut it for today's kids. We need to adjust; we need to press forward.

It's right at this point where we at New Life believe we need to part ways with thinking of the American church today. After taking a long and hard look at the predicament Christian young people are in these days, we are not at all convinced that conventional youth ministry is the solution to the problems we're facing. In fact, it is our firm belief *that conventional youth ministry itself is a major part of the problem.*

It's important for the reader understand what we're saying here. We certainly do not mean that it's wrong for a church to minister to its young people. That would be a ridiculous and horrible thing to say.

But we do believe that *conventional* youth ministry, as it's practiced today, is largely unhelpful and can even be destructive. We are convinced that today's typical youth ministry actually contributes (unknowingly of course) to the spiritual immaturity and spiritual apostasy that's so rampant among young Christian adults in the 21st century. Such a statement requires an explanation. Please keep reading.

WHY CONVENTIONAL YOUTH MINISTRY IS NOT THE SOLUTION

Before beginning this portion of our discussion, it needs to be said that we are in no way denying that many young people have benefited from their time in typical youth groups across the country. Many Christians have profited from the youth groups at churches in which they grew up.

But we are persuaded that conventional youth ministry has not been nearly as helpful to young people as is usually assumed. We'd even go farther and say that we believe that the common youth ministry approach has hurt our young people and our churches more than it has helped them.

To be more specific, we believe that conventional youth ministry today does more harm than good because it encourages three harmful scenarios:

1. Conventional youth ministry wrongly shifts the responsibility for training Christian young people from parents to the church.
2. Conventional youth ministry often encourages lifelong spiritual immaturity.
3. Conventional youth ministry frequently leaves our young people unprepared to live as faithful followers of Christ.

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

1) Wrongly Shifting Responsibility from Parents to the Church

Far too many Christian parents today think that faithful Biblical parenting means little more than dropping your child off at youth group twice a week.⁴ Too many Christian young people over the

⁴ DeVries, 91.

age of 12 are more comfortable talking to their youth pastor about important life issues than they are their parents. Far too many Christian families base their choice of a church home solely upon the draw of a church's youth program. It is easy to be grieved by this sad state of affairs.

Yet we should hardly be shocked by these realities seen in churches today. We evangelicals have created them by our continued commitment to conventional youth ministry.

Because of this commitment, we have neglected to teach what is clearly taught in the Bible – namely that parents are responsible for the spiritual upbringing of their children. As we find told to parents in Deut. 6:6-7:

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the way, when you lie down and when you get up.”

Parents are to train their children to think, believe, and live as Christians. The Bible lays ultimate responsibility for this training on Christian fathers. We see this in Eph. 6:4:

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Neglect of this teaching in the church today has historical roots. A little more than 50 years ago, evangelical churches across the country were faced with the sad reality that fewer and fewer Christian parents were fulfilling their God-given duty toward their children. This was particularly true for Christian fathers.

But rather than call Christian parents, especially fathers, to repentance and then train them for their duties, many concerned laymen and church leaders attempted to remedy the situation themselves by providing

Christian youth with the godly nurture and training they were not getting at home. The problem with this approach, however, was that it addressed the symptoms of the problem without fixing the root cause.

As a result, the problem of 50 years ago has gotten worse not better.⁵ Youth ministries and youth pastors play a larger role in the lives of young people than they ever have. And today's Christian parents are even less prepared and less willing to fulfill the roles that God has called them to play in their children's lives. And the fact is that simply doing more conventional youth ministry will only aggravate this problem.

2) Encouraging Lifelong Spiritual Immaturity

In addition to leading parents to ignore their own responsibility to spiritually nurture their children, conventional youth ministry often encourages a lifetime of spiritual immaturity in the children that have grown up in it. As was hinted at above, more and more Christian young people are growing up into young adults who are **entertainment obsessed**, who are **peer centered**, and who are **resistant to real godly authority**. These realities have historical roots as well.

The Obsession with Entertainment

We've seen already that youth ministry became a huge priority for the church in the 1950's and '60's. It was discovered early on that teenagers weren't very excited about going to services and events that looked just like the "boring" ones their parents attended. Efforts were made to create more excitement at the youth meetings. Newer music was sung. Younger leaders were chosen. Sports figures and other entertaining people were brought in as guest speakers.

⁵ The Barna Group, *The Barna Update: Twentysomethings Struggle to Find Their Place in Christian Churches* (<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage-.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=149>).

Not long afterwards, the kids who participated in this kind of youth ministry grew up and began looking for churches of their own. Not surprisingly, they weren't greatly impressed with traditional churches. Consequently, churches began to form and minister in ways that resembled the youth ministry of 10-15 years ago. Contemporary music was emphasized. Liturgy was disdained. Sermons aimed less at being convicting and more at being encouraging.

The only people not thrilled with such changes were the teens of these churches. What was considered exciting and modern by their parents was now regarded by the kids as boring and passé.⁶ Thus youth ministers in these churches had to push the boundaries even farther to get the attention of the youth. Acoustic guitars were exchanged for electric. Tambourines were tossed out and drums were brought in. Youth pastors stopped resembling fun loving adults and began looking like slightly-more-mature teenagers. Youth events became louder, messier, crazier – more extreme, more cutting edge.

The cycle continued. The young people in the extreme youth groups grew up. Suddenly the contemporary churches of the 70's and 80's were now traditional in the eyes of many young adults. In response to this, more edgy churches began popping up all over the country.

We still see many of these newer types of churches being formed today. And these churches, of course, resemble the youth groups of 10-15 years ago. For example, today's worship services not only try to be encouraging, they labor to be purely entertaining. The lights are dimmed in the audience so that the show on stage up front can be well lit. The "praise group" has been replaced by a full-on rock band. Sermons are now called "talks". The goals

⁶ DeVries, 31.

of the “talker” standing behind the clear podium are primarily to inspire, build self esteem, and to entertain. Sin is not only minimized, it’s practically ignored. The message of these churches, communicated in their worship and in their ministry programming priorities, is that God and the church are in your life to serve you, to thrill you, and to make your personal dreams come true. Christ’s message of losing your life in order to find it is long gone.

The young adults involved in churches like these are almost incapable of regarding something as important if it’s not fresh and entertaining. Anything resembling antiquity is despised. There is an unquenchable thirst for anything new and exciting. Faithfully and patiently living out of the Christian life in the mundane of the day-to-day, what USED to be known as Christian maturity, is now a concept that has become as strange as moving to the moon.

This thirst for the new and exhilarating is even stronger for the kids who attend these types of churches with their parents. A local youth group at an ultra-contemporary church in Va. Beach recently held a youth rally where the central event was the dropping of an engine from a crane!! One wonders if we’ll start seeing similar things in actual worship services in the near future. If the trends we’ve been describing continue, we can bet we’ll see it all sooner than we’d like to think.

Peer Centeredness

Not only do the assumptions and practices of conventional youth ministry create in our children a need to be always entertained at church, they also create an inability in our young people to have any meaningful relationships with people outside their peer group. This tragic reality developed historically as a by-product

of the attempt to reach teens with increasingly newer forms of entertainment.

Because parents had not taught their children to love what they loved, early youth workers had to reach young people was something different. This created the dizzying cycle we just described in the section above. But it also brought about the conclusion that the wisdom and practices of older generations are out of touch and irrelevant. Of course, Christians in all generations have been tempted to sin by thinking this way; but as conventional youth ministry developed over the last generation, the temptation has become much stronger for evangelicals. Many are past the point of resisting.

It has been common place for quite some time to hear Christian teens say they feel far more comfortable discussing life issues with their friends than they do their parents. This has little to do with a fear of getting in trouble. It has more to do with the notion that older people wouldn't understand or would have very little to say that would be helpful.

And this notion is rarely ever challenged because churches separate the teens from the rest of the congregation as they minister to them. Youth groups become almost a separate "church" within the church.

Many teens have now become church going adults. Yet in order to keep these folks attending, many churches have had to develop separate ministries for almost every age group and life situation. This way people can only hang out with those who are in the same boat as they are. Thus we have churches with "college and career" groups, "older singles" groups, "young married" groups, "families with young children" groups, "retiree" groups, etc.

While some churches do their best to keep Christians of all ages together by providing almost endless amounts of age segregated ministry, other churches are catering to the newest wave of young adults who think they are walking into a nursing home when they enter a room containing two people over 40. These churches seek to ONLY attract the very young and very edgy. Older people and older ideas are considered needless. One local Va. Beach church uses this statement as a marketing slogan:

“We’re not your parent’s church.”

When we remember that the Bible calls Christian parents to train their children to love what they love, a slogan like the one above is surely a horrible commentary on the state of the church in America today. And we think conventional youth ministry bears much of the blame.

Resistance to Godly Authority

Resistance to the practices and insights of older Christians has inevitably led Christian young people to resist the spiritual authorities that God has placed in their lives. Because children have learned to see their dad and mom as out of touch, the authority of parents has been undermined. An increasing amount of Christian teenagers are rebelling against the authority of their father and mother. Even more alarming is the fact that more and more parents are refusing to do anything about it.

This resistance to authority of course follows our young people into young adulthood where the resisted authority figures are no longer parents but are now church elders. A large number of Christian young adults have absolutely no desire to seek and heed the good counsel of the particular group of elders God has placed over them. And the thought of obeying even a scriptural

mandate from a group of church elders is appalling to many young adults in the church.

Few Christians in their twenties have even the foggiest notion of what the author of Hebrews is talking about when he writes,

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Heb. 13:17)

This is truly a catastrophe.

To sum up, we’re convinced that conventional youth ministry encourages lifelong spiritual immaturity because it leaves our children obsessed with being entertained, unable to benefit from those outside their peer group, and resistant to all forms of godly, spiritual authority. Unfortunately, there are even more negative things to say about typical youth programs.

3) Leaving our Children Unprepared to Live as Faithful Followers of Christ

Besides wrongly shifting child training responsibility away from parents and encouraging lifelong spiritual immaturity in our kids, conventional youth ministry also leaves our children ill equipped to lead the adult lives that God has called them to live as His people. This can be seen in two arenas. Modern youth ministry leaves our children **self-focused and hyper-individualistic**; it also leaves them **unprepared to face the challenges** this godless world will through at them.

“Me-Focused” Young Adults

Since its inception, youth ministry has been specifically geared toward the interests of the younger generations. As the years have progressed, youth ministry’s focus on the unique desires and interests of teenagers has only increased and become more intensified. Consequently, vast numbers of young people have been raised in a form of Christianity where everything is centered around them – around their needs, their desires, and their interests.

It’s not surprising, then, when we look around at churches today and find that they are filled with young adults who are no longer asking questions like, “What can *I* do for this church and its people?” Instead, they are asking questions like, “What can this church and its people do for *me*?”⁷

We American Christian adults have a hard enough time resisting the temptation to become individualistic about our Christianity. The harsh reality is that the “me-friendly” young adults churned out of our youth groups have an even greater struggle with this temptation.

Many young Christian adults aren’t even aware there should even be a struggle at all!! It’s becoming very common for young adults to see the local church as little more than an optional add-on to their Christian experience.⁸ And if the local church isn’t up to their liking, then living for Jesus on their own will do just fine. Such is the sad thinking of a large number of young evangelicals. We at New Life are convinced that conventional youth ministry has contributed to this growing, sinful trend.

⁷ How many of us known people who have left churches and gave the following as a reason: “I’m just not getting anything out of it anymore.”?

⁸ The Barna Group, *The Barna Update: Teenagers Embrace Religion but Are Not Excited About Christianity* (<http://www.barna.org/-FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=45>).

Unprepared Targets

Today's youth groups love to focus on fun. They love to emphasize outreach. They love to stress the supposed need for a relationship with Christ that's always extra-emotional, never mundane. Yet one thing modern youth groups have stopped doing almost all together (assuming they were EVER doing this) is preparing our children for the emotional, moral, and intellectual assaults that the world will certainly send their way.

Fewer and fewer young Christian adults believe in even the basic concepts of Biblical morality (sexual abstinence before marriage, the avoidance of drunkenness, the importance of marrying a Christian, etc.)⁹. Even fewer have a clue about how the Bible says they should evaluate a potential spouse, choose a job, assess a local church, etc. Because this is the case, large numbers of Christian young adults are making foolish and sinful decisions which are ruining their adult lives before they even turn twenty-five. Many end up leaving the faith altogether.

Not only are our Christian young adults unprepared to make important life choices, they're unprepared to resist the philosophies of the world which will surely weaken if not completely undermine their faith. Too many young Christians assume Darwinian evolution is consistent with the Bible. Too many are denying the absolute authority and inerrancy of Scripture. Too many are sucked in by the lies of feminism and end up questioning the basic roles that God has given to Christian men and women within the church and within the home. And too many young people are subscribing to the ethical and religious relativism of post-modern philosophy.

⁹ The Barna Group, *The Barna Update: Morality Continues to Decay* (<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&Barna-UpdateID=152>).

Children growing up within our churches and youth groups are getting plowed by the world as young adults. Those who survive the world's onslaught and stay in the church are so focused on their own needs that they're often little benefit to those around them. Allow us to say again that we think conventional youth ministry bears much of the responsibility for this sad state of affairs.

Summary...

We've seen that we are experiencing a horrifying crisis when it comes to the spiritual status of young Christians today. Yet rather than holding up conventional youth ministry as the solution to this crisis, we have seen that typical youth ministry has created this crisis and is only making it worse. It's done this by wrongly shifting the spiritual responsibility for our children from parents to the church, by encouraging lifelong spiritual immaturity in our young people, and by leaving our young people completely unprepared and ill equipped to live as faithful Christians in the church and in the world.

The ugly truth is that conventional youth ministry has failed us. We must all come to grips with this. And when we do, we must seek to minister to our children in radically different, more effective ways. And not only must our new ministry methods be effective, they must be Biblical.

At New Life we believe that we have begun, by God's grace, to move in this direction. Are we doing things perfectly? Of course not. But we're persuaded the Lord will do wonderful things for our young people as we continue to implement Biblical strategies for ministry to youth. We invite you to keep reading and see what we have in mind.

NEW LIFE'S MINISTRY TO YOUTH

Foundation – Parents are Responsible for their Children

We at New Life Presbyterian Church believe the primary responsibility for training children to know and serve the Lord Jesus Christ belongs to parents, particularly to fathers. This belief is founded upon the clear teaching of scripture:

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 - These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the way, when you lie down and when you get up.

Ephesians 6:4 - Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

So what should the church be doing? The church's responsibility, then, is to assist parents, particularly Fathers, in ministering to the young people within their homes. New Life Presbyterian Church is committed to helping parents in whatever way necessary as they seek to mold their children to be faithful believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

How New Life Plans to Assist

New Life Presbyterian Church is eager to help parents in primarily three ways:

- 1. By Encouraging and Enabling Parents**
- 2. By Instructing our Church's Young People**
- 3. By Encouraging our Young People to Serve the Church Body at New Life**

Let's look at each of those in a little more detail.

Encouraging and Enabling Parents

The elders of New Life Presbyterian Church are committed to provide Biblical encouragement and training for the parents in this church, particularly the fathers. This happens at New Life in several arenas:

A) During the worship service

First, worship reminds us that our God is a gracious and merciful Father. Remembering this is essential; because Godly parenting is a daunting task, impossible for all of us. Yet in weekly worship we are reminded of the fact that our Lord forgives our sins, makes up for our inadequacies, and enables us to fulfill His commandments. Weekly public worship is necessary, because it calls us to place our faith in the Lord and not in our own efforts.

In addition parents learn from the service itself about how God loves and ministers to *His* children (see our pamphlet *Worship: Why We Do Things This Way*, or read it online at <http://www.newlifevb.org/worship.asp>). In addition, parents are given much practical instruction about parenting from the sermons themselves.

B) At the adult Sunday school classes

Two of our frequently offered adult Sunday school classes are specifically designed for parents. The first one is entitled *Godly Leaders of Godly Homes*. The purpose of this class is to practically train husbands and fathers (or single, female household heads) to lead their wives and children in righteousness. The second class is called *Training Children According to the Scriptures*. During this class parents learn the Bible's instructions for bringing their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

C) At our men's meetings

Every month our men get together on Saturday morning to discuss the victories and challenges of being a leader of a godly household. These meetings are always a great time of instruction and encouragement.

D) Through dedicated men's discipleship

New Life's elders recognize the importance of men's discipleship. At our church this takes place in one-on-one situations as well as in small group settings.

E) By helping parents to have fun times with their families and encouraging them to plan other events for those of the church

Some parents, particularly Fathers, find it extremely difficult to have fun with their kids, particularly as they get older. We at New Life believe making fun happen in the home is vital to winning and keeping the hearts of our children. And we are committed to providing families with whatever types of assistance (including the things mentioned already) need for their house to become a house of joy.

In addition, we're very much in favor of our teenage youth getting together and having a good time with one another. We just also happen to believe that it is the responsibility of the parents to make this happen. That being said, we are willing to provide those families with whatever assistance they would need to bring these events about (bulletin announcements, use of the church, attendance by our leaders, etc).

Instructing our Young People

The leadership of New Life Presbyterian Church regards the teaching of our church's young people as one of our highest priorities. We at New Life are especially committed providing our high-school age youth with the Biblical wisdom they need to thrive as God's people living within a hostile world. This commitment is demonstrated in the following:

A) In our senior high Sunday school curriculum

We realize not all parents are equipped to teach everything their children need to know about the scriptures and about life. We feel it's the church's job to supplement the instruction of parents and provide whatever specialized teaching is needed. Only our strongest teachers will be tasked to teach the high school. Senior High Sunday school will NOT be a "throw-away" class at this church.

Our senior high Sunday school curriculum is designed to make sure that our older kids are exposed to everything they need to be prepared to live life as a Christian in a hostile world. Topics will include:

- Life in the Covenant: Promises and Responsibilities
- Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Election
- Christ our Righteousness
- The Ten Commandments Applied
- The Historic Creeds of the Church
- Secularist Lies
- Finding a Good Church (Seniors)
- What to Look For in a Husband/Wife (Seniors)
- The Biblical Purpose of Marriage (Seniors)
- Campus Ministry and Church (Seniors)
- Etc.

B) In our yearly seminars

Our goal is to host at least one weekend seminar a year that addresses issues that are crucial for our children's development in the faith. In 2005 we invited a representative from Answers in Genesis to present the numerous Biblical and scientific merits of the seven literal day creation view. Future topics will include:

- Courtship vs. Dating
- Finding Your Vocation
- The Ugliness of Feminism
- Etc.

C) By scheduling regular contact between our elders and senior high youth

Each of our elders is committing to a scheduled portion of casual time with two of our high school aged young people a year. These meetings will allow our teenagers to get the insights of strong men of God in whatever area they'd like. Our elders will also seek to encourage the spiritual development of each youth and learn how they can be praying for them. More often than not, young people look back at conversations like these with leaders in their church as some of the most significant times of their lives. We expect these meetings to be no different.

Encouraging Service to the Church

New Life Presbyterian Church welcomes and encourages our young people to serve our church in a variety of ways. This service is made possible by:

A) Including 10-12 graders in our prayer meeting

Our bi-monthly prayer meeting is one of the most important meetings for the adults of this church. Having our older youth present accomplishes several essential things. It shows them we trust them with the most sensitive prayer requests of the church body. It invites them to see that others besides them have problems and struggles. It also allows them to pray out loud and enter into the battles many adults in our church are facing. Finally, it helps them to see that the body of Christ functions best when Christians of all ages open up to one another and offer help to each other.

B) Youth Participation in the Ministries of the Church

The youth of our church are encouraged to actively serve in ministry areas at New Life, areas often reserved for adults in other churches. These ministries include:

- Mercy Meals
- Praise Music Team
- Ushering
- Lawn Care
- Building Maintenance
- Etc.

By serving in these ministries, our children learn that following Christ is not only about being served by His church, it's also about serving others in His church. In addition, participating in these ministries causes our youth to work hand-in-hand with the adults of our congregation. Experience in this makes it infinitely easier for them to later foster relationships outside their particular peer group.

C) Youth Participation in Short-Term Missions Trips

We are committed to providing many short term mission opportunities for all the members of our congregation. We are also committed to making sure our high school aged young people are a part of these trips. Participation in these trips, again, takes their eyes off themselves and opens their understanding of what our Lord is doing around the world.

D) Youth Participation in multi-church or denominational events.

Other PCA churches in our area hold fantastic youth retreats, seminars, and mission trips. At times, we will encourage our youth to be involved in these helpful multi-church events.

Summary...

If you're a parent with kids you can count on several things from this church. We will challenge you to take on the God-given responsibility to train up your children as Christians, constantly focusing on the Lord's forgiving and enabling grace as we do so. In addition, we will seek to provide you with the practical life skills necessary to fulfill the responsibilities given to Christian parents.

As your children grow up here we will see to it that your kids are exposed to the best possible Christian teaching we can provide. In addition, your children will be given real life ministry opportunities that will correctly mold their view of the Lord and His church. By God's grace, your kids will never, ever know a day when they don't love the Lord Jesus Christ and His people.