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November 2009

The boy-child of Mary

Dorothy Henderson, The Presbyterian Church in Canada



An easy-to-use Christmas program for a few children, a few youth/adults and a choir.

That boy-child of Mary, a lovely, lilting carol in *The Book of Praise* (#155), forms the basis of this short program.

Scene One

A small group of children - perhaps an adult, too - are finishing up wrapping Christmas gifts.

Voice 1: It's almost Christmas day and things are nearly ready.

Voice 2: Wait! There is something that

we've forgotten to do!

All others: What? What's that?

Voice 2: We forgot to set up the manger scene - the crèche.

As the group gathers around a manger, they begin to unwrap figures that are part of the crèche scene - shepherds, manger, Mary, Joseph, wise men, etc. As the group is setting up the manger scene - on a table where everyone can see - the choir or congregation quietly sings verses 1 and 2 of That boy-child of Mary.

One member of the group very carefully holds up the baby Jesus and adds him into the scene, as the narrator speaks quietly.

Narrator: You have to be very careful with babies. My cousin had a new baby recently and I noticed that you have to be very careful picking her up and looking after her.

The narrator pauses as the group settles down, some standing, some sitting. Then the narrator continues.

Narrator: My cousin had a very hard time finding just the right name for her baby. In the end, she called her Anna. It's a pretty name, don't you think? It means "grace and favour." I wonder if Mary and Joseph had a hard time choosing a name for Jesus. *(Narrator picks up Bible and thumbs slowly through to a marked page, Mt. 1:20b-21, and reads.)* "An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'" Mmmm...it seems that it was God who named the baby Jesus.

Voice 1: Do you know what the name Jesus means?

Narrator: Yes! It says right here. *(Points to Bible.)* God is with us.

Group voices murmur, "God is with us," several times. The choir or congregation sings again, more robustly, verse 2 of That boy-child of Mary.

Scene Two

All group members move to the side while two children stay behind. They pick up some gifts and carefully examine them, shaking them gently. The music of That boy-child of Mary is quietly playing in the background.

Narrator: (Name of child 1) and (name of child 2) are wondering: What is this amazing gift that they will receive this Christmas? (Name of child 1) and (name of child 2) are learning, too, that God has given the most amazing gift of all - the gift of a saviour. God loves us so much and wants so much to be close to us that God came as Jesus to live among us. Through faith in Jesus Christ we experience the presence of God. Now, that's a present!

The choir or congregation sings verses 3 and 4 of That boy-child of Mary.

Scene Three

Voice 1: Do you have your Christmas shopping done?

Voice 2: I didn't do much shopping this year, but I am ready for Christmas.

Narrator: If I asked you, "What did you get for Christmas last year?" would you remember? Christmas gifts are wonderful, but even more wonderful are the things that last forever - gathering with people we love, doing a kind deed for others, enjoying God's love. (Name of child 1) and (name of child 2) are learning that there really is one central reason for this season. It is to celebrate the gift of the Christ child, the birth of the boy-child of Mary. And so we gather in church to light candles and sing about Jesus' birth. *(Older members of group light some candles around the crèche.)* We gather to pray and thank God for the gift of the child in the manger.

The choir or congregation sings verses 5 and 6 of That boy-child of Mary.

Ideas that can expand this program

- Sing carols prior to the program. Good choices for children are Away in a manger (#149); Go, tell it on the mountain (#133); Jesus, our brother, kind and good (#150); Joy to the world (#153); Silent Night (#154).
- Lay out a long sheet of white paper table cloth and, in an intergenerational group, paint a big sign – Jesus is the reason for the season. Post it in your church.
- Gather together to make cookies. Package some on paper plates to take to share with others. Enjoy some together.
- Plan a visit to a nursing home and do this short program there.
- Gather and wrap gifts for families who are experiencing a difficult Christmas season.

Elders and Christian Education

Calvin and Prayer
Session Starter #18

What's on Your Mind?—Infant baptism without the parents?

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Elders and Christian Education

Dorothy Henderson, *The Vine*

In our Canadian Presbyterian tradition, the Book of Forms is very clear.

The session is responsible for providing for the programme of Christian education for persons of all ages in order that they may be confronted by the Gospel, may grow in faith, participate in the life of the Christian community, and be active witnesses to Christ in the world. The session is responsible for the administration, oversight, support and evaluation of the total Christian education programme of the congregation within the confessed doctrine of the Church as set forth in the preamble to the ordination questions. (Book of Forms, 112, 112.1)

It is important for sessions to take this seriously, since many sessions leave Christian education decisions to Sunday school teachers. Paying attention to Christian education communicates to everyone that the church cares deeply about what is being taught in your congregation.

Here is a checklist for elders in your congregation to assist in this aspect of your congregation's ministry. (If some don't apply to you, just ignore them.)

If some of the boxes cannot be checked, but you think that some ideas need to be implemented, have some conversation about how to move toward this goal.

1. We provide educational opportunities for all ages.	
2. The children, youth and adults in our congregation use educational material that has been approved by our denomination. (See <i>Curriculum Chart 2009–2010</i> .)	
3. We provide an adequate budget for the support of Christian education programs, and this budget is reviewed yearly.	
4. The offerings that children and youth bring to Sunday school and youth programs are used for mission and outreach, not to purchase their educational material.	
5. As a session, we assume responsibility for the recruitment and appointment of teachers.	
6. We use the <i>Leading with Care</i> risk assessment tool to determine the risk levels of various ministries. (See <i>Leading with Care</i> , p. 21.)	
7. We ensure that all teachers/leaders comply with safety requirements, including police records checks, as described in <i>Leading with Care: A policy for ensuring a climate of safety for children, youth and vulnerable adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada</i> .	

Elders and Christian Education (continued)

8. At the beginning of the program year, we have a commissioning litany for teachers and leaders during worship.	
9. We work hard to provide family educational opportunities. We see what our congregation does as a supplement to the Christian nurture provided by parents.	
10. We provide training opportunities for all our teachers and leaders. ¹	
11. Our educational programs are holistic. We provide opportunities to grow in knowledge (understand the faith) as well as opportunities to serve (live the faith). Our goal is to have a living faith that seeks understanding.	
12. At least once a year we honour our teachers and educational leaders.	
13. As elders, we make an effort to get to know the children by name and encourage them ourselves.	
14. We do an annual review and evaluation of our educational programs.	

Some things to discuss as elders

- Read this quote from *The Active Life* by Parker Palmer.

I feel sorry for teachers who are required to spell out precise “learning objectives” long before a class begins so that they can measure their own “effectiveness.” I feel sorry for their students, too. Education dominated by preconceived images of what must be learned can hardly be educational. Authentic teaching and learning requires a live encounter with the unexpected. An element of suspense and surprise, an evocation of that which we did not know until it happened. If these elements are not present, we may be training or indoctrinating students, but we are not educating them. In any arena of action – rearing children, counseling people, repairing machines, writing books – right action depends on yielding our images of particular outcomes to the organic realities of ourselves, the other, and the adventure of action itself.

What advantages do churches have in regard to teaching?

What is the difference between training or indoctrinating and educating?

- Tell others about a positive learning experience you have had in the church - as a child, youth or adult.
- For years there was a large banner hanging in the central hall at the PCC national office. It read, “The Presbyterian Church in Canada: a thinking church with a tender heart.” If you were to create an educational motto for your congregation, what would it be?
- Have some fun making a top-ten list! As a session, list the ten most important things that people learn at church. Post this list where others can enjoy it.

¹ The Presbyterian Church in Canada offers two excellent training programs: TLC (Teacher/Leader Courses) - minimal cost - and *Opening Doors to Discipleship*, a free online program. The denominational login number to register for *Opening Doors to Discipleship* (Teaching Skills, Bible Background or Reformed/Presbyterian Faith) is 42596.

Calvin and Prayer

Session Starter #18

Don Muir, Associate Secretary, General Assembly Office

Prayer—Attributed to John Calvin:

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou continue daily to restore us to thyself, both by scourges and by thy word, though we cease not to go astray after sinful desires, O grant, that by the direction of thy Spirit, we may at length so return to thee, that we may never afterwards fall away, but be preserved in pure and true obedience, and thus constantly continue in the pure worship of thy majesty and in true obedience, that after this life past, we may at last reach that blessed rest, which is reserved for us in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

An elder must be a professing member of the congregation and must be “an example to the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

Book of Forms, 106.1

Scripture

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

Luke 11:1-4

A Brief Commentary

The disciples, noting the deep devotion of Jesus and John the Baptist to prayer, wanted to learn how to commune with God in the same way. Jesus responded by providing a model of praise, confession and intercession that would be repeated across the ages and around the world.

Reflection

Prayer has always been an essential part of the life and practice of the followers of Jesus. As elders within a congregation, it is essential to be women and men of prayer, not only for our own spiritual benefit but also to provide a healthy example to the rest of the congregation.

Since 2009 marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, we continue to reflect on Calvin’s writings, published in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, an introduction to the Protestant faith, first published in 1536. Here is a little of what Calvin wrote about prayer in Chapter XX, 3.

Calvin raises an interesting question about prayer that many continue to ponder today; namely, if God already knows our difficulties and our needs, is it not “...superfluous to solicit him by our prayers, as if he were winking, or even sleeping, until aroused by the sound of our voice?” Calvin responds by pointing out that prayer is not so much for God’s sake as it is for ours. He lists three benefits of prayer.

1. That our heart may always be inflamed with a serious and ardent desire of seeking, loving and serving him, while we accustom ourselves to have recourse to him as a sacred anchor in every necessity;
2. That no desires, no longing whatever, of which we are ashamed to make him the witness, may enter our minds, while we learn to place all our wishes in his sight, and thus pour out our heart before him;
3. That we may be prepared to receive all his benefits with true gratitude and thanksgiving, while our prayers remind us that they proceed from his hand.

Discussion

1. Write Calvin’s reasons for prayer in your own words. Talk about them. Do you agree with Calvin?
2. How can elders be “an example to the believers” in terms of prayer?

What's On Your Mind?

Is it permissible for someone other than a child's parents, such as a grandparent, to present that child for baptism?

The sacrament of baptism is a truly magnificent celebration of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

When an infant is baptised, most often it is the mother, father or both parents who present the child to receive this sign and seal of our union with Christ and his church. Occasionally there are circumstances in which it is not possible, or not appropriate, for the parents to be the ones who carry the child to the font. Thus the question, "Is it permissible for anyone else to accept this responsibility?"

Book of Forms, section 110.4, states, in part:

[Baptism] is to be administered to unbaptized candidates in conjunction with their profession of faith and admission as professing members, and to infants when **at least one parent** is a professing member of the Christian church, baptized, and is fulfilling the covenant engagement of baptism.

At first glance, it appears at least one parent must be involved in the baptism of a child. However, if you look up this section in the *Book of Forms* you will see it draws attention to General Assembly decisions that allow others to assume the role of parent in this situation. For example, in 1993, the General Assembly approved this statement:

"...the administration of infant baptism is not necessarily restricted to circumstances in which there are natural parents competent to provide Christian nurture for their children. Infants who are subject to the Christian discipline of believing persons other than their natural parents may properly be baptized, provided that such believing persons are already fulfilling the function of parents in the Christian nurture of the infants."

(Acts and Proceedings 1993, p. 232)

In other words, as long as the session, who is responsible for the provision of the sacrament of baptism, is satisfied the person presenting the child is Christian and in a position to fulfill the baptismal vows by helping nurture the child in the faith, that person may be permitted to carry the little one forward for baptism and on to the child's first steps of the faith journey.

Blessings,
Don Muir
Associate Secretary
General Assembly Office

What's on your mind?

Do you have a question about the polity of our church? Are you confused by something that happened at session, presbytery, synod, or General Assembly? Puzzling over a section of the *Book of Forms*?

Send your questions to The Rev. Don Muir and he will strive to answer them in future issues of *Equipping for . . . Elders* in a manner that maintains confidentiality and seeks to be helpful to the church at large.

Contact Don at: dmuir@presbyterian.ca
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Dramatic Readings for the Lenten Season

Calvin Theological Seminary Worship Symposium

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Dramatic Readings for the Lenten Season

By Donna McIlveen

Monologue - Mary's Sister and Jesus' Aunt



Oh, how I wanted to protect my sister Mary
from the terrible agony of watching
her son die.

All I could do was stand beside her...
stay with her...

and remind her that she was
not alone.

My heart was broken,
but not in as many pieces as Mary's.
She wept for such a long time.

I tried to hold her tight.

Everyone around was crying,
but Mary's weeping was so full of pain.
To lose a son right before her very eyes!
Why oh why?

The guards - they were so cruel to Jesus.

But not one dared come near us and
tell us to move on.

They could see the sheer anguish on
my sister's face.

Mary knew this day would come,

but it doesn't matter how much you
prepare.

She loved her son,

and watching him be put to death
was more than any mother
should have to endure.

EQUIPPING FOR . . . Worship

Life has not been easy for Mary.

As her sister, I tried to be there in any way I could.

As Jesus' aunt, I tried to be there.

I remember when Mary was pregnant...oh, it wasn't easy.

So many people talking

- but sisters look out for one another.

I remember when Jesus was born...

I cradled him in my arms...

And then when Jesus was just little,

Mary and Joseph had to escape to Egypt

so that cruel beast Herod wouldn't find them and kill the child.

We were all so glad when they were able to return home safe and sound.

Then, like children do,

Jesus was grown, almost before we knew it

- twelve years old and becoming a man.

We'd all been in Jerusalem for the Passover

when suddenly, on our way back,

we discovered Jesus was missing!

He was nowhere to be found!

I was frantic with worry.

But somehow Mary seemed to know that Jesus was all right.

And when she told me how they found him with the teachers of the Law...

seeing how they listened to him...

well...

we knew that he had been where he needed to be.

Jesus grew and became a strapping grown man...

and,

well,

life was never the same again.

After his baptism,

Jesus went about the countryside preaching about the kingdom of God.

Mary understood what her son was doing,

but still it was hard - as a mother -

to watch her son get so tired out

from all the crowds of people who wouldn't stop hounding him.

But Mary knew that Jesus had to do what he was doing...

that he was making a difference.

Not everyone listened to my nephew, but those who did...

their lives were changed.

I came to understand that Jesus was not just my nephew,

but truly God's own Son.

And then...not that long ago...

when Jesus talked about going to Jerusalem...

oh, if we had only tried to stop him...

But his mind was set.

He seemed to be drawn to Jerusalem.

Even though the crowds at first received him well,

he must have known that it wouldn't last.

I think he knew...

We didn't understand what he meant.

I don't think any of us really did.

Sometimes I feel like I have let Mary down.

I followed my sister and her family as they travelled with Jesus.

I helped to provide for the needs of all the followers.

But as the crowds grew bigger and near hysteria at times,

I sensed that all was not well.

I tried to speak to Mary about going back home...

but she knew her place was with Jesus.

And my place was with Jesus as well.

After all, I *am* a follower of Jesus,
not just because he is my nephew,
but because he is the Messiah.
I truly believe that he will save us.
But
I don't understand how that will be.
And when I see what this week has done to my sister...
She has seen so much pain.
As I think back on the events of these last few days,
I knew I had to do what I had always done.
I needed to stay with Mary.
And I am doubly thankful that I wasn't the
only one.
Some of our friends and fellow followers of
Jesus surrounded her too.
My good friend Mary, you know her?
She's married to Clopas.
She's another faithful Jesus follower, and she
stayed with us.
She is such a good friend.
She said as long as she was needed, she would
be there...
and she was.
Yes, good friends are so important,
and she has been such a rock during these last
few days.
Between you and me,
I don't think I would have been able to remain
strong for my sister
if it hadn't been for my good friend.
Her husband, Clopas, had decided to stay with
some of the disciples.
I don't understand why they all left.
I'll never understand why they abandoned Jesus
so quickly.
Not one was left,
Except John, that is.
He has been such a comfort to Mary as well.

Jesus must have known John would be.
He was on the cross, so close to death,
yet he found the strength to say to his mother,
"Dear woman, here is your son."
And then he turned to John and said, "Here is
your mother."
Oh, it was such a special moment.
Even in his agony on the cross, Jesus was thinking of
his mother, my sister.
But still the unimaginable pain...
Life has not been easy for Mary.
As I wonder what will happen now,
I know it won't be easy to continue as Jesus'
followers.
It will be difficult for all of us to know what to do.
But Jesus asked each of us to carry on, sharing his mes-
sage.
We must do that.
We can't let his message be forgotten.
I will look to God for strength, and it will be provided.
Doesn't the Psalmist say,
"Turn for help to the One who is your strength,
seek God's presence continually"?
Hmm, true, true...
Life is not easy for any of us,
but no matter the darkness,
we are not alone - we are not forgotten.





Monologue - The Forgotten Followers, Salome and Mary (Mary's Sister and Jesus' Aunt)

Narrator:

Listen now as two of Jesus' forgotten followers -
Salome, the mother of James and John,
and Mary, the mother of James the younger and
Joseph

- linger at the cross of Jesus.

They have followed...

they have listened...

they have learned...

and they have served.

And today they have seen with their own eyes their
master

abused, scorned, whipped and hung on a cross
to die.

Now they linger...

wondering...

What does it all mean?

Salome:

Oh Mary, why has this happened?

My heart is breaking

and I don't know if I can stay here...

How can I stay after everything that has happened?

How can you stay?

Mary:

I don't know why all this has happened...

I just know that I can't leave him.

He didn't give up on me when I needed him the most.

He healed me.

And then he looked at me

and smiled

and told me of God's love.

His words changed me.

He spoke compassion and healing and love.

His words had life.

I can still hear those words...

I can still feel his love...

God's love...
and I just know that I have to stay.

Salome:

I remember the first time I heard Jesus...
I was walking along the road
and noticed this crowd of people gathering by
the water.
I was so curious.
I just went over to see what all the fuss was about.
Everyone was listening so intently...
and yet it was as if he was speaking just to me.
His words had power
and I knew that my life would never be the
same.

Mary:

I remember the stories he told.
The woman mixing some yeast with the flour.
The sower scattering seed on the
plowed field.
The woman searching for a
lost coin.

As Jesus shared these stories,
he showed us how concerned he was for each
one of us...
that none of us is forgotten.

Salome:

Ah yes.
The story of the woman who found the coin
was a real turning point for me.
As I listened to Jesus tell that story,
I began to understand what true joy is.
The woman was so full of joy when she found her lost
coin.
She wanted to tell everyone that she had found it.
And now I know
that God wants us to share in that joy as well.

Mary:

Hmmm...
Jesus taught us so much as we followed him.

It sure wasn't easy following him about the countryside,
but there was joy in that simple service.

But today...
where is the joy today?
All I feel is pain and sadness.
What does it all mean?

Salome:

Mary, remember when he spoke about suffering -
about coming here to Jerusalem to suffer.
I know I didn't understand.
All I wanted was my sons, James and John,
to sit with Jesus in his kingdom -
one on his right and one on his left.
I thought it was about greatness...
about participating in Jesus' rule...
But now I know it has nothing to do with power.
It's all about serving.

Oh, if only we had understood...

Mary:

None of us really understood, Salome.
You only wanted what was best for your sons, James
and John.
I wanted what was best for my sons, James and Joseph.
We all wanted what was best.
At first we didn't understand, but as we
listened...
as we followed...we learned.
Jesus showed us - and our sons -
what true joy and true greatness really is.

Salome:

But I feel so lost now without Jesus.
We need him...
still...
just as much as that woman needed to find her
lost coin.

Mary:

I know...
I feel the same.

But remember what Jesus said about his suffering.
As difficult as it is to understand,
Jesus suffered for us.
He suffered
and showed us his strength in weakness.

Salome:

Yes...
I remember...
He tried to help us see.
He said that he did not come to be served
but to serve
and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mary:

And that means for you and me...
and for everyone.

Salome:

But he's gone!
Where will we get our courage now?

Mary:

Salome, we joined his ministry and became followers
not knowing where it would lead.
He showed us God's love;
he showed us joy;
he showed us that in service is life.
As we listened to Jesus, our lives were changed.
We moved from being lost to being found.
Because of Jesus, we are no longer forgotten.
Because of him, we have courage.

Salome:

But I still don't understand -
I know I keep coming back to this -
but Jesus did nothing wrong.
Jesus was always more concerned for others than he
was for himself.
Everyone wanted so much from him.
There were days when he couldn't even walk down
the street
without someone begging for healing.

And he always took the time.
He always gave the people hope.

Mary:

Do you suppose when he sat and had dinner with
James and John
and the others last night that he knew what lay
in store for him today?
Looking back, he had that sad look in his eyes...
like he knew.
But if he knew, why didn't he do something to stop it?
I don't understand.

Salome:

His thoughts were on others again.
Remember last night when he spoke about the
new covenant -
about his body and his blood.

Mary:

And now his body is broken...
his blood shed.
To what end...
what purpose?

Salome:

I don't know.
Not even Peter seemed to understand last night.
And then it only got worse...

Mary:

I know... What was Peter thinking?
How could he deny Jesus like that...
three times?

Salome:

Peter is so ashamed of himself.
He never thought he could or would ever deny
Jesus -
he still can't believe he was so weak.

Mary:

He's beside himself, drowning in guilt.

We may never know why he ran.

But I do wonder how he could leave Jesus in
his hour of need.

How could he abandon Jesus like that?

Salome:

And now they've all left...

gone back to Galilee.

Do they think that going back to Galilee will make
everything just go away?

What are they thinking?

Mary:

So much has happened...

Maybe they just don't know what to do, where
to turn, what to say.

Salome:

But even the centurion who was standing here seemed
to understand.

He praised God and said that Jesus was a righteous
man.

If only he had spoken sooner...

but now even he has gone.

Why is everyone so eager to leave...

to just give up?

Mary:

So much has happened...

We left everything to follow this man,
and now here we stand.

What should we do?

Salome:

We have to stay.

We can't leave now.

I can't leave now.

Mary:

Remember the story that Jesus told
about the poor widow and the judge.

She didn't give up, and I don't think Jesus wants us to
give up now.

It won't be easy, but remember we are not forgotten.

As his followers,

it's our responsibility to persist,
to remain steadfast, just like that poor widow.

Salome:

And we need to pray.

Remember how Jesus always took time to pray.

Mary:

We need to pray for strength.

We need to pray for courage.

We are not forgotten

and we can keep doing what we can

to make sure that others know about Jesus and
his mission.

Salome:

Yes, we will keep doing what we can.

We will stay together and continue to serve.

Together we will ensure that Jesus' message of love and
compassion is shared. We have witnessed the horror
and the suffering

- now we must witness to others

and tell them about Jesus and his mission.

We must continue doing the will of God

by not forgetting the one who did not forget us.

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diaconal minister and Clerk of both the
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the Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario.*



Calvin Theological Seminary Worship Symposium

Each year, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, offers a worship symposium with a large variety of activities: music workshops, lectures, plenary addresses and worship seminars. The first worship symposium in 1988 had 20 participants. It has now grown to 1,400 participants, including visitors from 37 countries. Several people from The Presbyterian Church in Canada attended the conference in 2009, and Grace-ann McIntyre, one of the participants, sends this report.

Report on “Youth, Worship and the Seven Second Attention Span”

Mark Yaconelli, co-founder and director of the Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project housed at San Francisco Theological Seminary, presented an interesting seminar entitled “Youth, Worship and the Seven Second Attention Span.”

In describing worship that young people find meaningful, Yaconelli urged worship leaders to avoid trying to dazzle kids by overusing technology. PowerPoint displays are not going to impress them. What they need is real relationships with the adults in their church. Kids need acceptance and guidance about how to be in the world.

Worship services tend to be set up by adults for adults. Teenagers want first-hand religion, to see and feel Jesus, not just listen. Reach them by

- contemplation and openness to the presence of God, not control
- creativity and vitality, not conformity
- having people walk alongside them, rather than using products to teach them
- savouring and slowing down, rather than speeding up and overusing activities
- concentrating on relationships, not results
- looking at who they are, not what they can do
- valuing authenticity over order
- stimulating and reaching them, not just distracting them

Kids need a church that doesn't patronize, that listens to them. It should be a place where they can use their gifts, and a place that sees beyond those gifts. Adults should know the names of every young person in their congregation and a little bit - or a great deal - about them.

Details about the upcoming symposium (January 28-30, 2010) can be found at www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos/2010.

Your church should be a safe place for teens to explore and practice their faith, where they can talk about their doubts and get honest answers to honest questions. Teenagers want to see how God is impacting on people's lives. They want to learn the history of God and about their own place in their congregation. They need to know that the leaders care about their relationship with Jesus, not just their attendance.

Advice to adults who welcome youth in congregations

When meeting youth, it is helpful for you, as adults, to remember how you felt and what concerned you when you were a young adult. Were you worried about what others thought of you? Did you need affirmation? Did you have an adult to go to when you were in trouble?

Yaconelli states that, in a typical congregation, the adults are made anxious by teenagers. They want the kids in their church to be safe, respectful model citizens. In their turn, young people are just as anxious about the adults. They see them as isolated, stressed out and worried, with no friends, no fun, no passion about life.

How do we create meaningful spiritual encounters for young people when they live in a culture of constant physical, emotional, intellectual, and even spiritual stimulation? How do we avoid designing worship services that are anxious imitations of the marketplace? Through spiritual exercises, discussion and lecture, Mark Yaconelli explored an approach to adolescent worship, prayer, and spiritual formation that embodies wonder, heartbreak and healing.

Prepared and submitted by Grace-ann McIntyre, elder at Riverdale Presbyterian Church

Books by Mark Yaconelli:

Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus (Zondervan, May 2006)

Growing Souls: Experiments in Contemplative Youth Ministry (Zondervan, June 2007)

Downtime: Helping Teenagers Pray (Zondervan, October 2008)

Wonder, Fear and Longing: A Book of Prayers (Zondervan, due October 2009)