

Historical Timeline in Youth Ministry

EARLY FOUNDATIONS: (1824 - 1875)

characteristic of the era was the function to get children off of the streets and to teach them to read, cope with the decreasing emphasis on child labor. Early emphasis was still on children, as most teenagers still entered the work force relatively early. See 1875 for important change.

- 1780: Robert Raikes began Sunday school in England
- 1848: Evidence of youth ministry at FBC Rochester, NY and 1858 at FBC, Troy, NY
- 1824: American Sunday School Union formed in Philadelphia
- 1851: Young Man's Christian Association; 1858 was YWCA. Purpose was to help rural Christian youth retain their faith as they began to move into the cities. Methodology was through providing a place where young people could meet with friends, study the Bible, be trained as teachers, read, relax and have prayer meetings.
- 1875: Birth of the Public High School. Senter cites this as the end of the Early Era, because as public education recognized that adolescents were in need of formal education (instead of entering the work force), churches would have to follow suit.
- 1905: G.Stanley Hall coined the term "Adolescence" in a book of the same name

SOCIETY ERA: (1881 - 1925)

characteristic of the era was response to the question: How can the church shelter and keep young people who have committed themselves to an active faith?

- 1881: Francis Clark founded the Society for Christian Endeavor. Primary goal was to reinforce the desire of young people to grow in their walk with God--to strengthen their Christian Endeavor. High accountability. Movement spread internationally; by the time of the Boston convention of 1895, over 50,000 attended the meeting.
- 1887: Clark resigned his pastorate to work full-time with Christian Endeavor
- 1889: Epworth League (Methodist)
- 1891: Westminster League (Presbyterian); On April 22, 1891, a national Baptist young people's organization was formed which became the **Baptist Young People's Union** in 1895 (Ross, Taylor). Intent was to embrace Baptist youth groups, both emerging and established (like Christian Endeavor Societies which were present in many Baptist churches); all societies were urged to subscribe to The Young People at Work, the Baptist national publication, in order to provide continuity with regard to Baptist distinctives. From this point on, denominational allegiance became primary.
- 1893: Walther League (Missouri Synod Lutheran)
- 1895: Luther League (Lutheran)
- 1925: Scopes Monkey trial brought an end to what Senter called the "period of accountability" in Youth Ministry. Credibility of the Bible was in question, with the essence of Youth Ministry in danger.

FELLOWSHIP ERA: (1935 - 1967)

characteristic of this era was the emergence of both church-based youth ministries and parachurch clubs. In Southern Baptist churches, youth work included primarily, if not exclusively, the youth director and the youth. Gap developed between youth program and the programs of the church, (even Sunday school). Time period dominated by full calendars and sometimes disconnected events.

- 1930: Sunday evening fellowship meetings began to replace youth societies. Local churches began to take charge of all church-related youth activities. Massive shift as 39 major denominations formalized this change. Change occurred as basic emphasis of Youth Ministry shifted from nurturing the faith of young people to training in churchmanship.
- 1933: Evelyn M. McCluskey founded the Miracle Book Club in Portland, Oregon. Storytelling and Bible Exposition. Mother of parachurch movement. Jim Rayburn (Young Life) and Al Metsker (Youth for Christ) were both teachers of Miracle Clubs, but they eventually proved too far out on the edge for McCluskey because they wouldn't use her materials. They would soon have other ideas for clubs.
- 1934: Evangelistic rallies birthed the Youth for Christ Movement. Slogan "Youth for Christ" first began being used in the late 1930's in conjunction with evangelistic meetings. Jack Wyrzten and Jim Rayburn both had a form of these rallies, though Rayburn's were called, "Young Life Campaigns" and featured higher percentages of youth in audiences.
- 1935: Beginning of what Senter called the "Teens telling Teens" movement. Incarnational strategies involved youth attending club meetings in homes (McCluskey's idea).
- 1937: First full-time Southern Baptist Youth Minister in the Third Baptist Church in St. Louis
- 1938: First Youth Week, where students were spotlighted and given significant responsibilities in the church, including preaching, directing music, teaching in adult Sunday school
- 1941: Young Life founded. Jim Rayburn used a different strategy than had been used before.
1. Leader centered
 2. Evangelism focused--Missionary effort to win unsaved teenagers. Not primarily a Bible study.
 3. Messages had conversational approach, unlike fiery sermons.
 4. Emphasis on relational contact work. Earning the right to be heard.

Other club movements followed.

- 1946: Youth for Christ Clubs
- 1949: Phil Harris was named professor in youth education at SWBTS
- 1950: Common for all large and many medium-sized churches to have a youth director. Often, youth director was responsible for activities for entire church.
- 1954: Fellowship of Christian Athletes

YOUTH MINISTRY ERA: (BEGINNING IN 1960'S)

characterized by a move toward less organization. Church leaders began to believe that young people wanted and needed something more than fellowship groups. For most denominations, the goal became to "mainstream" or "integrate" youth into the life of the church, thus dismantling the youth bureaus and services that had been established. In SBC life, the shift in philosophy toward is was probably a reaction to the popularity of the relationship-based ministry that Young Life and Youth for Christ Clubs had enjoyed. In SBC, move was to maintain the strong growth in Youth Ministry, but the focus began to move toward shared ministry with parents, youth workers, and youth.

- 1966: Campus Crusade for Christ (founded by Bill Bright) begins high school work
- 1968: Youth Specialties founded. Ideas #1 was published. Resource era was ushered in.
- 1972: Youth for Christ moved to Campus Life Strategy, where clubs were student-led and localized to specific high school settings.
- 1973: Youth Ministry Consultant position created by BSSB. Bob Taylor was first consultant and served until 1984.
- 1973: First DiscipleNow weekend organized by Tony Dyer at Wayside BC, Miami, FL
- 1974: Group Magazine was founded by Tom Schulz. Content was Youth Ministry techniques and technology. Other publications followed which were "professional" journals; Youthworker which became Youthworker Update; and Youthworker Journal, a more academic offering from Youth Specialties.
- 1982: Campus Crusade for Christ named their high school ministry, "Student Ventures"
- 1984: Richard Ross assumes Youth Ministry consultant position at BSSB (Lifeway)
- 1985: Average age for youth ministers had increased to 33 years. Average tenures exceeded 3.5 years (up from 18 months in 70's and now longer than that of pastors)
- 1990: See You at the Pole begins in Burleson, Texas. Becomes a nationwide prayer movement focused on the high school and middle school campus.
- 1992: True Love Waits introduced to Lifeway by Richard Ross. Over 340,000 teenagers have signed the commitment card.
- 1999: YouthLink 2000 (may mark a turn of more than the century)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ERA: (BEGINNING IN 1990'S)

there has been a great deal of recent growth in the "professionalization" of youth ministry, reflected in advanced models for youth ministry in the local church, advent of academic credentials, professional associations, and significant training events.

Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina host annual Youth Ministry Conclaves, which have shifted from resource training to professional training. Youth Lab at SWBTS (begun in 1968) has moved from summer youth ministry training to more advanced topics, and most Southern Baptist (and many non-SBC) seminaries offer a similar type of weekend training.

- 1994: Mark DeVries published *Family Based Youth Ministry* model
- 1994: R. Allen Jackson joins faculty at NOBTS
- 1995: Rick Warren published *Purpose Driven Church*, which is adopted for youth ministry
- 1998: First Priority partners with NAMB, hires field staff to coordinate evangelistic clubs
- 1999: Youth Ministry Institute founded at NOBTS
- 2000: At least 40 schools offer degrees with youth ministry major or minor, many on the undergraduate level.