



OAK GROVE ENCOURAGER

**“And let us consider one another in order to
stir up love and good works” Hebrews 10:24**

OCTOBER 29, 2006

An Effective Youth Program

By Norman E. Fultz

Let me tell you about a church and a program it offered for its youth which seems to have met with no small degree of success. But before we look at the youth program, maybe we should consider why we need to discuss it.

You see, it is felt by many that if youth are to be reached by the church, the church must engineer special programs and activities that will appeal to them. In some cases, the idea is that a special youth minister is needed to keep the youth involved. He is to be as one with them and at the same time be an organizer of all sorts of special outings and activities.

In some cases it is thought the youth should be loosely organized so as to be properly represented as a group to the elders

(somewhat like the student council in a high school). The elders, thus always duly counseled by the youths' representative, can be sure to provide for all their "needs." The responsibility of parents to provide activities of a social nature for the children with other youth is relieved as the church assumes it. So, in the mad rush for youth programs in recent years, the one I want to tell you about has often been shoved aside with little or no consideration. Some have thought of it as outmoded.

Surely you can now see why I considered it worthwhile to discuss the effective youth program of my home congregation. However, before giving the specifics of the youth program, let me tell you a bit about that church beginning with my earliest memories.

The country meeting house was a modest, white frame structure situated on a small plot, donated I think by one of the older members, adjoining the grammar school grounds. The building was one large room filled with pews made from slats of wood about two inches wide and placed about one inch apart, a design that made for a fair degree of discomfort. Arranged in three rows plus a few in the Amen corner, the pews provided a seating capacity of perhaps 200. Heating was by a large coal-burning stove over in one corner. This allowed for much togetherness of the first two or three families to arrive on cold and inclement days as all sought to get close to the heater until it turned red hot and its heat began to radiate into the room. (The heat never seemed to reach the far corners.) Summer cooling was provided by raised windows and an ample supply of fans from a funeral home in town. Especially handy were those fans during the annual "big meetin" held in late summer.

Services may not always have begun right "on time" since people came from every direction in that part of the county by

whatever means of travel at their disposal and over roads that were dusty in summer and often deeply mud-rutted in winter. But when every one who seemed to be going to make it that day was present (sometimes the cedar wood whittlers and talkers had to be "sung in"), services began. The song leader, a somewhat rotund brother whose glasses fitted low on his nose allowing him to look over the rim at the audience, would announce the hymn number in the old paper back hymnal. A sharp striking of the tuning fork against the book was followed by a discernible humming of the beginning notes up and down the scale. He was a good song leader then and continued to be as long as he lived.

One of the brothers would lead in prayer, and Bible classes would be arranged, six classes to the best of my memory — a "card class" for "little 'uns," a class for older women and one for older men, a class for younger youth, one for older youth, and one for young adults. Three classes across the front and three across the rear of the auditorium with only an aisle separating them. It was often easier to hear the teaching in the class across the aisle than to hear one's own teacher. Not the most advantageous arrangement at all when considered by today's convenient buildings with multiple, well-equipped classrooms.

The communion table was prepared with great care. A bright white cloth, starched and smoothly ironed, was spread on the table. Another equally as carefully prepared and placed, was spread over the elements of the Supper. Before communing, the brother "at the table" made a short talk about the significance of the occasion before taking the cloth by its creases and gingerly folding it and

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**Oak Grove
Church of Christ**

(502) 749-9209

Sunday

Bible Class:

9:30 AM

Morning Worship:

10:30 AM

Evening Worship:

5:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class:

7:30 PM

Evangelist:

Bruce J. Dehut

Home Bible Studies Available
Upon Request

laying it to one side. That carefulness of preparation, even in my youthful observance, seemed to bespeak the reverence with which worship was to be offered.

Preaching was generally a once-a-month affair as a "part-time" preacher visited us. The one I best recall was a school teacher or principal from the adjoining county. He walked with a decided limp on his artificial right leg; and upon arriving at the pulpit, he always asked the congregation to bow as he led us in prayer. Then, of course, there were those "big meetin's" in summer in which the meeting house would not hold everyone and many gathered near the windows outside so as to hear as they sat on car fenders or the flat beds of farm wagons that had been pulled up close.

But now, about the youth program. It was probably because of it that I became a Christian as did many of my contemporaries and those who were a bit older and those who followed after. The youth program consisted of Bible classes mentioned above, and the regular periods of worship in which all were encouraged to participate alike, whether youth or adult. It was expected that one would prepare his lesson, and the teacher did not apologize for calling upon class members to answer questions. Parents prepared their lessons complete with "daily Bible readings" and expected their children to do likewise. Discipline seemed never to be a problem.

Effective? Well, it must have been; for many obeyed the gospel; and to this day, a half century or more later, I can count numbers who have remained faithful - some becoming preachers, some elders, some marrying preachers. It was nothing special, just a church meeting in worship and service where folk seemed to realize what it was all about.

"Divide The Living Child In Two"

The passage of scripture that I believe best demonstrates the magnificence of king Solomon's wisdom is recorded in *1 Kings 3:16-27*. Two women come before the king relating the sad narrative of two newborn boys, one who lived and the other whom died. The first woman accuses the second of unintentionally killing her son by laying on him, and of exchanging the infants while the first woman slept. Both women claimed to be the mother of the living baby and it is left for Solomon to discern the truth of the matter. The power of God's wisdom in Solomon was evident to all when he explained his process for settling the affair. *1 Kings 3:24-25 Then the king said, "Bring me a sword." So they brought a sword before the king. 25 And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other."*

I am convinced that Solomon had no intention of doing any harm to the child but his orders brought about exposing the honesty of each of the women. *1 Kings 3:26 Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, "O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!" But the other said, "Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him."*

My main purpose of writing this is not to espouse about the wisdom of Solomon but rather to focus on the character of the two women under consideration.

THE WOMAN WHOSE SON HAD DIED

She had already suffered one tragedy, so she had everything to gain and nothing more to lose in this matter. The life of the other woman's son was not her concern. She had sustained a tremendous loss by the death of her son, so it was of no consequence if the other boy lived or died. By her willingness to have the child divided, the best she

could hope for was to not be exposed as a liar. She placed the saving of her reputation above the life of another human being.

THE WOMAN WHOSE SON LIVED

The disposition of this woman was far different than the other. She knew in her heart that the living child was hers and she was ready to sacrifice the opportunity to raise him as her own just to spare him. She was also willing to accept the shame of being labeled a liar and of having her reputation tarnished so that the child could live. Her compassion and unselfish disposition is what saved the life of her son.

A similar situation presented itself in the New Testament when the saints at Corinth were disputing each other in the civil courts. Paul first explains that Christians should be able to resolve their problems among themselves and if that wasn't possible than why not just endure the injustice and be cheated. The idea behind this stems from the fact that God, the righteous judge, knows all and will mete out justice accordingly. *1 Corinthians 6:7-9a Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? 8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?*

Our demeanor as followers of Christ should be one of honesty and integrity and we pray that others would possess those attributes as well, but sorrowfully this is not always the case. So in times when peace is best served by us demonstrating humbleness, let it be. *1 Peter 2:19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.*

- Bruce J. Dehut

THE LORD'S DAY PRIVILEGE LIST

Sunday Morning Service

Announcements: **J.O. Smith**

Song Leader: **Wayne Runner**

Opening Prayer: **Greg Walker**

Lord's Table: **Arvil Young
Jim Phelps
Chris Runner
Randall Hood**

Scripture Reading: **Brian Shepherd**

Sermon: **Bruce Dehut**

Closing Prayer: **Jr. Stout**

Sunday Evening Service

Announcements: **J.O. Smith**

Song Leader: **Wayne Runner**

Opening Prayer: **Larry Runner**

Sermon: **Bruce Dehut**

Lord's Table: **Arvil Young**

Closing Prayer: **Bill Milliner**