

Youth Newsletter

March 2005

Omega Youth Pay a Visit to a Special Group of Valentines

On Sunday, February 13, eight members of Bethlehem's Senior High youth group set out to spread some Valentine's Day love to a special group of people.

After church, the youth baked several dozen cupcakes, decorated them with chocolate icing, and wrapped them in cellophane and red ribbon.

Then, the youth headed out to visit several of our local shut-ins, to give them the fresh-baked treats and spend some time visiting.

The group also paid a special visit to Sylvia Fowler before returning to church.

"We wanted to help celebrate Valentine's Day with our shut-ins," explained Omega Youth Group member Brittany West.

"Valentine's Day is a day for showing love, and I think this was a great way for the youth to demonstrate that they truly care," commented David Salerno, Bethlehem's Youth Director. "I know their visits make a lasting impression."

YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULES

SCOOTERS • VOYAGERS • PATHFINDERS

- March 6 Family Skating Party, 5:15pm-7:15pm
Smithfield Skate Ltd
- March 13 Regular Meeting, 5:30pm-7:15pm
- March 20 Regular Meeting, 5:30pm-7:15pm
- March 27 **No Regular Meeting**
Easter Sunday
- April 3 Regular Meeting, 5:30pm-7:15pm

ALPHAS • OMEGAS

- March 6 Family Skating Party, 5:15pm-7:15pm
Smithfield Skate Ltd
- March 13 Regular Meeting, 5:30pm-7:15pm
- March 20 Regular Meeting, 5:30pm-7:15pm
- March 26 Deliver Easter Lilies to Nursing Home and Shut-Ins, time TBA
- March 27 **No Regular Meeting**
Easter Sunday
- April 3 Regular Meeting, 5:30pm-7:15pm

For more detailed information about your group's schedule, please contact your group's leaders.



Left to Right: Omega Youth decorate and wrap cupcakes for the shut-ins; youth visit with Ms. Lane Salmon, Ms. Claudia White, and Ms. Gurney Wilkins



The Youth Groups at Bethlehem Christian Church

Family Skate Party

Sunday, March 6, 2005

5:15pm - 7:15pm

Smithfield Skate LTD

200 Wimbledon Lane • Smithfield, VA

Parents, bring your kids out and join in the fun!

Pizza, drinks, and snacks provided

Skate and rollerblade rental provided, or bring your own

DIRECTIONS: Exit US 10/32 North from US 58 Bypass toward Smithfield. Continue on US 10/32 North through Chuckatuck. Continue straight at stoplight JCT US 258 (Benn's Church). Turn right at 3rd light beyond JCT US 258 onto Canterbury Lane (Advance Auto Parts is on the right, Farm Fresh and KFC are on the left). Smithfield Skate LTD is approximately 1 block ahead on the right.

See you there, and bring your friends!



Alphas, Omegas Travel to Historic Gettysburg for Annual Ski Retreat

On the morning of Saturday, February 19, 17 Junior and Senior High youth and 3 chaperones packed our new church bus and left Graham Hall for Liberty Mountain Ski Resort near historic Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

After stopping for lunch en route, the group arrived in Gettysburg at 3:00pm, and visited the Gettysburg National Battlefield Park. The youth walked along rows of historic monuments and climbed to the top of the Pennsylvania Memorial before leaving for the Gettysburg Quality Inn at about 4:30pm.

After settling in their rooms, the youth went to dinner at a nearby Friendly's restaurant, and then returned to the hotel to get a good night's rest.

However, a short while later, Omega youth leader Becke West got the call that no parent wants to receive. Her son, Josh, who came up with friends for the weekend and was already snowboarding at Liberty Mountain, had a snowboarding accident and was taken off the slopes by the Ski Patrol.

Becke immediately went to the ski resort to pick up her son and take him to Gettysburg Hospital, where tests revealed he had broken his leg. While the group slept, Josh underwent surgery to have a rod inserted into his leg and the break repaired.

The next morning, the group attended the early morning worship service at Gettysburg Presbyterian Church, while Becke, Josh, and his sister, Brittany, remained in the hospital. Dubbed "The Church of the Presidents", Abraham Lincoln attended a political meeting at Gettysburg Presbyterian following his delivery of the Gettysburg Address. President and Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower were members of this church and frequently attended during his presidency. After the service, the youth briefly toured the historic church, viewing the original pew in which Lincoln sat as well as various historic plaques throughout the sanctuary.

Following the church service, the group then proceeded to Liberty Mountain Ski Resort.

The day was great for skiing, as several inches of fresh powdery snow had fallen on the slopes just two days before.

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While many youth stayed on the beginner slopes, some tried their skills on the intermediate and advanced trails. Particularly enjoyable was the Dipsy Double trail, a mile-long beginner-level slope that began at the top of the mountain and wound its way to the bottom, offering many breathtaking views of the valley below.

However, shortly after 4:00pm, misfortune struck once again. Chaperone Paula Thornton's stepson, Josh, had fallen face first into the ground and suffered a concussion. Paula accompanied Josh on the ambulance ride to the hospital, where he received treatment and underwent a precautionary CAT scan.

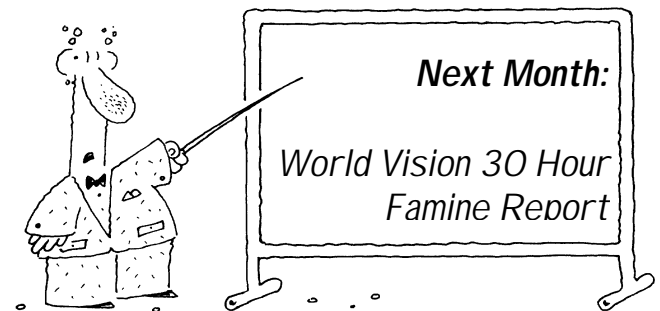
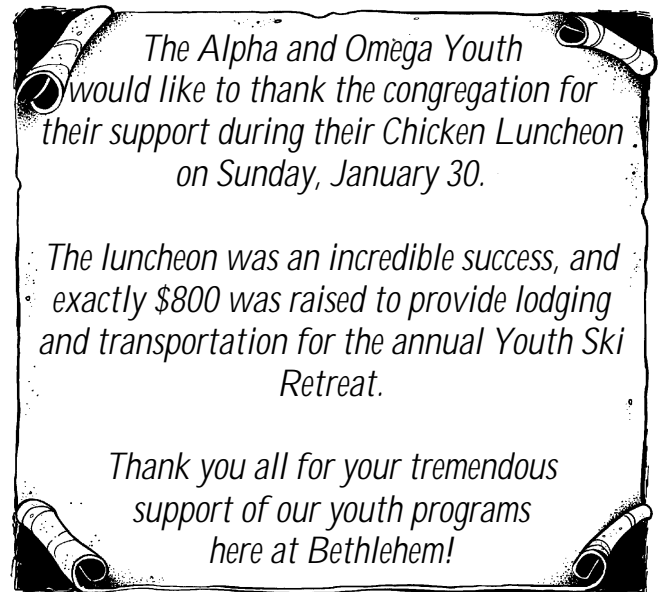
Slightly frustrated by the large holiday crowds, the cramped ski lodge, and the exorbitant food prices, the group left Liberty Mountain at about 6:00pm, and returned to the hotel. Pizza was ordered and delivered to the hotel, where the youth ate and relaxed for the remainder of the evening. Shortly after 8:00pm, Josh Thornton was released from the hospital and re-joined the group at the hotel.

The next day, the group awoke and began packing the bus for the trip home. After morning devotions, the youth went to visit Josh West in Gettysburg Hospital. However, the visit quickly turned into a "going away party" as, just minutes after the group arrived, Josh was released from the hospital and driven home.

After leaving the hospital, the group had lunch at a nearby Wendy's, drove along the Gettysburg National Battlefield Park Auto Route, and visited the Virginia Memorial before heading for home.

After stopping in Hopewell for supper, the group arrived back at church on schedule at 8:15pm.

While this ski retreat had more than its share of challenges and misfortune, the youth nonetheless grew closer to each other and closer to God, perhaps even more so than usual. And, as leaders, we got a glimpse of the true maturity and responsibility of the youth. We saw that they care for and support each other, and we couldn't be more proud.



Youth Director's Corner
by David Salerno

Over the past several weeks, I've had the privilege of talking personally with 15 Senior High parents concerning our youth fellowship program here at Bethlehem.

Several months ago, concerns were expressed that the youth were not receiving enough religious education in the Omega Youth Group.

In light of these concerns, I felt it important to try to talk individually with each and every parent of the Senior High group in order to get their opinion of the youth fellowship program, and to see if they shared these concerns.

Although I wasn't able to talk to every parent, I was able to talk with a large representative sample—over 75%—of them. In addition to the

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Senior High parents, I also informally surveyed a number of church members and 10 of the Senior High youth for their opinion of our youth program.

Each discussion was approached with the goal of finding out what was really on the hearts and minds of the Senior High parents. I typically asked a very simple question, such as “What are your thoughts about the youth group program?” or “Do you have any concerns about the youth group program?”, then let the parent do all of the talking while I listened. Sometimes I had to ask a few follow-up questions, but most times the parents had no difficulty telling me what they truly felt about our youth program. I was enlightened by what I heard.

I appreciate the honest and open responses I received during this survey. Some conversations were very short, while others were quite long. But I personally feel that each and every minute was well spent.

Overwhelmingly, over 75% of the responses from the Senior High parents were supportive of the youth fellowship program and its current structure. Most felt that we were on the right track with our youth program. I appreciate all of the supportive comments, and it touched my heart to hear that we are indeed making a difference in the lives of your children.

I also appreciate the constructive criticism that was received from those who had concerns about the current structure of the youth fellowship program. Each and every opinion is valuable to me, and every suggestion will be taken to heart as we strive to be the best youth fellowship program possible.

After discussing the results of this survey with the Youth Advisory Committee, I realize that various circumstances may have left the impression with some Senior High parents that devotions were not important, or were an afterthought.

During the months of October and November, many special events in the church—preparation for Youth Sunday, our annual Harvest Festival, Youth Sunday, and a Youth Concert—caused us to deviate from our regular meeting schedule for

several consecutive weeks. It is easy to see how such a departure from our normal schedule could leave that impression.

I also realize that our devotional strategy itself may be contributing to that impression. In both the Alpha Youth Group and Omega Youth Group, our curriculum consists of a library of devotional materials from reputable publishers such as Group Publishing and Youth Specialties. Devotions will often vary in length and teaching method from week to week. Some devotions may be as short as 5 or 10 minutes, while others may last the entire 75 minutes. Some devotions may be lecture-based, while others will incorporate group discussion or an object lesson. This variety is intentional, and is the strength of our program. It helps us to keep the learning environment casual and fun, and enables us to be more responsive to the needs of the youth. Most parents I talked to recognize that, although learning is important, it must also be fun in order to keep the attention of the youth, and to keep them coming back for more.

Let me reassure each and every youth group parent that devotions are indeed an integral part of our youth fellowship program. Even during our recent Ski Retreat, which was primarily a fellowship activity, we had a group prayer before we left on Saturday, attended church on Sunday morning, had a group devotion on Monday morning, and had a final group prayer when we returned to church Monday evening. We work hard to make sure that a spiritual focus is at the center of all that we do.

In the future, there will certainly continue to be times when a mission project, a visit to the nursing home or to our shut-ins, or a special event such as our annual Harvest Festival or a Youth Concert will replace a Regular Meeting, and a “typical” devotion may not be presented. However, these events usually have religious educational value in and of themselves, and are all part of a larger strategy of ministering to our youth. When situations arise that cause a departure in the Regular Meeting schedule, I value your understanding and patience, and encourage you to discuss with me or your child’s club leader any questions or concerns you may have.

Until next month, God bless,

