


THE HEARTBEAT OF YOUTH CHOIR:

Relevance, Retreat, Relationships

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DISCUSSION

If asked the question...


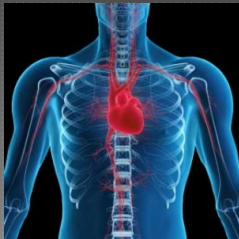
“What is the lifeblood of your youth choir?”

- ▶ What would you say?
- ▶ What would your students say?



FUNCTION OF THE HEART

- ▶ The heart is a hollow, muscular organ, which functions as a pump for the movement of blood through the body.
- ▶ Circulate oxygen throughout the body
- ▶ Sustain human life



Think back to our discussion on Millennials and teenagers.

“Based on what you have seen, heard, and know, how will you respond?”
Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good (Steven Garber)

Mandate and a calling to respond to the adolescent’s cultural situation (culture of abandonment), and Youth Choir is one of the ways we can do that.

Vocation/Calling is “where our deep gladness meets the world’s greatest need.”

Friedrich Buechner



OUTLINE

3 signs of a healthy heartbeat in Youth Choir ministry.
AKA, 3 essentials for a vibrant and active Youth Choir ministry.

Relevance Retreat Relationships

RELEVANCE

Discussion:

- ▶ Is youth choir still relevant today?
- ▶ What makes it so? Or not?

Definition:

- ▶ The quality of being closely connected or appropriate to the matter at hand.

RELEVANCE

GUIDING THOUGHTS

It is clear that children should be instructed in some useful things... (but) to be always seeking after the useful does not become free and exalted souls. (p. 9)

Aristotle in Poetics from *Touching Eternity* by Tom Barone

What did I discover I was doing to inhibit this miracle of wholeness in a rehearsal, or even in a performance? The first destructive factor present was negativism. It is impossible for a negative element to produce a positive one, and surprisingly, we are all prone to be negative. I remember seeing on the Today Show the results of a study regarding our normal thought patterns. The results were alarming! The average person thinks negatively 95% of the time...

RELEVANCE

GUIDING THOUGHTS

If this human computer is recording primarily negative thinking brought about by daily circumstances often (but not always) beyond our control, and if my unconscious constantly colors the way my conscious mind perceives daily experiences, the results are obvious. What a challenge to attack negative thinking not only in rehearsals but during the rest of the day as well! (pp. 25-26)

Weston Noble in *Creating the Special World*

RELEVANCE

Youth Choir as a shaper of identity, character, and faith

RELEVANCE

Youth Choir can help us reach and retain teenagers by:

- ▶ Meeting specific identity-forming needs (emotional, social, spiritual, musical/artistic):
 - ▶ Learn how to become a young adult
 - ▶ Feel purpose, valued, loved
 - ▶ Friendship
 - ▶ Adult relationships
 - ▶ Learn empathy, humility, honesty, trust, respect
 - ▶ Learn to look outside of themselves and serve others
 - ▶ Implement and test their faith and put it to use

RELEVANCE

Youth Choir can help us reach and retain teenagers by:

- ▶ Providing an organized structure/system with adult support for developing faith in a safe, supportive, trusting community.
 - ▶ Adults can help translate the faith by handing down the catechesis, language, and practices of Christianity in tangible and understandable ways.
 - ▶ Adults can help teenagers in articulating their own faith.
 - ▶ *See Dr. Christian Smith's book, *Souls in Transition*

RELEVANCE

Youth Choir can help us reach and retain teenagers by:

- ▶ Providing an organized structure/system with adult support for developing faith in a safe, supportive, trusting community.
 - ▶ Students can practice spiritual disciplines (prayer, bible study, testimony/witness)
 - ▶ Students can rehearse the Gospel in song
 - ▶ Students can practice articulating their faith through sharing opportunities in and out of rehearsal
 - ▶ Students can serve others through sharing music or hands-on service ministry

RELEVANCE

Youth Choir can help us reach and retain teenagers by:

- ▶ *Helping students transition out of
 - ▶ Adolescence into young adulthood
 - ▶ Inactive, passive faith to active faith engagement.
- ▶ *Providing a "cultural toolbox" to make faith consequential.
 - ▶ A creed (an articulated God-story and belief)
 - ▶ A community (a sense of belonging with peers and adults)
 - ▶ A calling (a sense of purpose and significance)
 - ▶ A hope (the belief that God is moving the world somewhere).

Application: A mission-minded, purposeful, service-based youth choir can actively help provide a systematic way for adults and students to interact, a place for developing these tools, and a method to respond to the current challenges of today's teenagers.

*Source: *Souls in Transition* (Christian Smith)

RELEVANCE

From *Sticky Faith* (Powell/Clark)

- ▶ Kids who left the faith report having questions about faith in early adolescence that were ignored by significant adults (parents, pastor, teacher).
- ▶ A factor causing kids to shelve their faith is the segregation of kids and adults in church. Kids who attend church-wide services are more likely to keep their faith.
- ▶ The more kids serve and build relationships with younger children the more likely they are to hang on to their faith.

RETREAT

Discussion:

- ▶ What comes to mind when you hear the word "retreat"?

Definition:

1. An act of moving back or withdrawing: *a speedy retreat | the army was in retreat .*
2. An act of changing one's decisions, plans, or attitude, esp. as a result of criticism from others: *the unions made a retreat from their earlier position.*
3. A quiet or secluded place in which one can rest and relax: *their mountain retreat in New Hampshire.*
4. A period of seclusion for the purposes of prayer and meditation: *the bishop is away on his annual retreat | before his ordination he went on retreat .*

RETREAT

GUIDING THOUGHTS

When a mutual and sympathetic understanding of the human spirit is built, people finally become persons. (p. 149)

Howard Swan in *Conscience of a Profession*

RETREAT

Spirituality is the most practical thing in the whole wide world. I challenge anyone to think of anything more practical than spirituality as I have defined it—not piety, not devotion, not religion, not worship, but spirituality—waking up—waking up! Look at the heartache everywhere, look at the loneliness, look at the fear, the confusion, the conflicts in the hearts of people, inner conflict, outer conflict. Suppose somebody gave you a way to getting rid of all that. Suppose somebody gave you a way to stop the tremendous drainage of energy, of health, of emotion that comes from these conflicts and confusion. Would you want that? Suppose someone showed us a way whereby we would truly love one another, and be at peace, be at love. Can you think of anything more practical than that? But that politics is more practical. What's the earthly use of putting a man on the moon when we cannot live on the earth? (p. 11)

Anthony deMello in *Awareness*

RETREAT

The awareness of grandeur and the sublime is all but gone from the modern mind. Our systems of education stress the importance of enabling the students to exploit the power aspect of reality. To some degree, they try to develop his ability to appreciate beauty. But there is no education for the sublime. We teach the children how to measure, how to weigh. We fail to teach them how to revere, how to sense wonder and awe. The sense for the sublime, the sign of the inward greatness of the human soul and something which is potentially given to all men, is now a rare gift. Yet without it, the world becomes flat and the soul a vacuum. (p. 34)

Abraham Joshua Heschel in *God in Search of Man*

RETREAT

Everything in us cries out against it—which is why we externalize everything. It is so much easier to deal with the external world, to spend our lives manipulating material and institutions and other people instead of dealing with our own souls. We like to talk about the outer world as if it were infinitely complex and demanding, but it is a cakewalk compared to the labyrinth of our inner lives! (p. 82)

Parker Palmer in *Let Your Life Speak*

RETREAT

Testimonials

"I enjoy making music because..."

- ▶ ...it lets me be me. (Girl, 16)
- ▶ ...it makes me feel as if I am really worth something; as if I have a true purpose in life, which I do. To serve God with my voice. It's like my heart literally smiles and dances and sings along with me. (Girl, 17)
- ▶ ...I enjoy making music because it's a part of my life. Without music, life would be dull. Music isn't something that I want; it's something that I need. (Girl, 14)

RETREAT

Youth Choir as an escape (or respite)

RETREAT

Actions Points:

- ▶ Foster a welcoming, open environment that involves adult leaders (select carefully)
- ▶ Boundaries provide freedom and security
 - ▶ Establish simple, clear guidelines about behavior, speech, attire, cell phones, etc.
- ▶ Create a structured rehearsal plan
 - ▶ Keep things moving, focused, enjoyable, and productive
 - ▶ Positive reinforcement
 - ▶ Humor
 - ▶ Chat chance
 - ▶ Foster independent singing (not solo singing).

RETREAT

Actions Points:

- ▶ Recognize birthdays or student achievements at school
- ▶ Connect with students before and after rehearsal
- ▶ Build an environment of healthy competition among the sexes/choir sections.
- ▶ Develop student leadership team (upperclassmen or seniors)
- ▶ Involve spouse
- ▶ Be consistent in expectations, recognition of successes, discipline, rehearsal flow/format
- ▶ Other ideas?

RELATIONSHIPS

DISCUSSION:

- ▶ What are some of the relationships that form in the youth choir?
- ▶ What is the significance of those relationships?
- ▶ How do we foster/encourage those relationships?

RELATIONSHIPS

GUIDING THOUGHTS

YC is a place of connections (modes of engagement):

- Musical, Mental, Physical, Emotional/Relational, Spiritual, and Social Connections

"The only way to have friends is to be one."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

RELATIONSHIPS

Let the person who cannot be alone be aware of community. Let the person who is not in community beware of being alone. (p. 78)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together*

Community does not necessarily mean living face to face with others; rather it means never losing the awareness that we are connected to each other. It is not about the presence of other people—it is about being fully open to the reality of relationship, whether or not we are alone. (p. 55)

Parker Palmer in *A Hidden Wholeness*

RELATIONSHIPS

Unfortunately, community in our culture too often means a group of people who go crashing through the woods together, scaring the soul away. In spaces ranging from congregations to classrooms, we preach and teach, assert and argue, claim and proclaim, admonish and advise, and generally behave in ways that drive everything original and wild into hiding. Under these conditions, the intellect, emotions, will and ego may emerge, but not the soul: we scare off all soulful things, like respectful relationship, goodwill and hope. (p. 59)

Parker Palmer in *A Hidden Wholeness*

RELATIONSHIPS

Only he who himself turns to the other human being and opens himself to him receives the world in him. Only the being whose otherness, accepted by my being, lives and faces me in the whole compression of existence, brings the radiance of eternity to me. Only when two say to one another with all that they are, "It is Thou," is the indwelling of the Present Being between them. (p. 30)

Martin Buber in *Between Man and Man*

All actual life is encounter. (p. 62)

Martin Buber in *I and Thou*

RELATIONSHIPS

Youth Choir as a community

RELATIONSHIPS

Key Ideas (Hurt 2.0)

- ▶ Adolescents desire meaningful relationships with other adolescents.
- ▶ Adolescents desire meaningful relationships with adults.
- ▶ Adolescents desire community and want to know that they are a part of something bigger than themselves—a place to make a meaningful contribution.

RELATIONSHIPS

Actions Points:

- ▶ Take a retreat. Check out www.cueweb.net/cuenotes for ideas on ways to do this. (Cathy Britton)
- ▶ Plan non-rehearsal social events...kick-off party, Fall/Christmas/Winter/Spring fun outings, social events
- ▶ Have a worship service together, led by student and/or adult leaders (take communion)
- ▶ Serve outside the walls of the church at least 2 times a semester
- ▶ Sing outside the walls of the church at least 2 times a semester
- ▶ Go on a choir mission trip (sing and serve)
- ▶ Big/Little system
- ▶ Small groups
- ▶ Other ideas?

WRAP-UP

RELEVANCE: YC as a shaper of identity, character, and faith

RETREAT: YC as an escape (respite)

RELATIONSHIPS: YC as a community

From Hurt 2.0 (Clark)

- ▶ Those who work with youth should be trained in the changing youth culture.
- ▶ Those who serve adolescents must work together.
- ▶ Those who serve adolescents must understand youth and provide boundaries.
- ▶ Parents need to be equipped and encouraged to parent the changing adolescent.
- ▶ Communities must make sure that each student has a few adult advocates who know and care for him or her.

WRAP-UP

Questions/Comments?

TESTIMONIALS

"We know how to be teenagers. We want [the church] to show us how to be adults."
Kristin, age 17 (*Hurt 2.0*)

I enjoy making music because...

- ▶ ...it gives me an escape, a way to express myself, a connection with my peers, audience, God, and myself. It helps me through every aspect of my life and I would be lost without it. (Girl, 15)
- ▶ ...my dad died I was 13, and he was a musician. So whenever I sing it feels like I am making up for the time I missed with him. (Boy, 16)
- ▶ ...it has drastically changed my life for the better and has brought me closer to the Lord and it gives me such joy and passion. It is what I want to do with my life because its impact on me is so amazing, I can't describe it! To God be the glory! (Girl, 16)

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